DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 779 IR 051 289

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TITLE	Archival Appraisal of Records of International Organizations: A RAMP Study with Guidelines.
INSTITUTION	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris (France). General Information Programme.
REPORT NO	PGI-85/WS/4
PUB DATE	Nov 85
NOTE	107p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Archives; Developing Nations; Evaluation Criteria; Guidelines; Information Retrieval; Information Services; *Information Storage; *Information Systems; International Cooperation; *International Organizations; *Preservation; Public Policy; Records (Forms); Selection; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	*Records Management; Weeding (Library)

ABSTRACT

Prepared under contract with the International Council on Archives (ICA), this study reviews past and present policies and procedures in the archival appraisal and disposal of noncurrent records (to the extent that such have been developed and implemented) by a representative group of international intergovernmental organizations. This study and the guidelines it recommends address centralized, partially decentralized, and totally decentralized registries and filing systems. The implications of each type of system for effective management of current, semicurrent, and noncurrent records are discussed. In preparation for the study, questionnaires were submitted to 30 organizations in the United Nations system. Replies were received from 18 respondents, of whom 11 completed the questionnaires and 7 reported they had no archives. The study first explores the appraisal criteria in terms of values that affect the preservation and disposal of records. Next, methodology of records selection is treated as a complement to appraisal criteria and the effect of arrangement and classification systems on selection is discussed. A description of appraisal practices, based on responses to the questionnaire and on-site visits, follows. Conclusions and guidelines are then presented. A bibliography and a list of United Nations staff who were consulted or returned questionnaires are included. (THC)

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United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

Paris, 1985

IR051289

Original : English

PGI-85/WS/4

Paris, November 1985

ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL OF RECORDS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: A RAMP STUDY WITH GUIDELINES

prepared by

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Recommended catalogue entry:

Guptil, Marilla B.

Archival appraisal of records of international organizations : a RAMP study with guidelines / prepared by Marilla B. Guptil [for the] General Information Programme and UNISIST. - Paris : Unesco, 1985. - iii, 96 p.; 30 cm. - .
(PGI-85/WS/4)

I - Title

II - Unesco General Information Programme and UNISIST

III - Records and Archives Management Programme (RAMP)

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PREFACE

The Division of the General Information Programme of Unesco, in order to better meet the needs of Member States. particularly developing countries, in the specialized areas of records management and archives administration, has developed a long-term Records and Archives Management Programme - RAMP.

The basic elements of the RAMP programme reflect the overall themes of the General Information Programme. RAMP thus includes projects, studies, and other activities intended to:

1. Promote the formulation of information policies and plans (national, regional and international).
2. Promote and disseminate methods, norms and standards for information handling.
3. Contribute to the development of information infrastructures.
4. Contribute to the development of specialized information systems in the fields of education, culture and communication, and the natural and social sciences.
5. Promote the training and education of specialists in and users of information.

This study, prepared under contract with the International Council on Archives, reviewes past and present policies and procedures, to the extent that such policies and procedures have been developed and implemented by a representative group of international intergovernmental organizations in the archival appraisal and disposal of their noncurrent records. Since it deals with centralized, partially decentralized and totally decentralized registries and filing systems, and discusses the implications of each type for effective managément of current, semicurrent and noncurrent records, particularly their appraisal and disposal, this study and the guidelines it recommends should also be of value and interest to governments whose record-keeping policies on practices reflect in whole or in part the systems described herein.

Comments and suggestions regarding the study are welcomed and should be addressed to the Division of the General Information Programme, UNESCO, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris. Other studies prepared under the RAMP programme may also be obtained at the same address.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Control of records production is of universal concern, as is the capacity to reduce the resulting volume through comprehensive disposition programmes. However, the appraisal of records and utilization of an appropriate methodology of selection for their disposition is one of the most difficult of archival functions because it is neither automatic nor systematic; rather, it is intellectually-taxing, time-consuming and, varyingly subjective. The major objective of this study, therefore, is to provide guidelines by which to lessen the arbitrariness of appraisal and to increase its systematization through precautionary measures requiring close coordination between records management and archival functions. These objectives are expressed through the medium of the appraisal of records of international organizations: what has been preserved and why, and what ought to be preserved and why.

In preparation for this discussion, questionnaires were submitted to 30 organizations of the UN System. Out of 18 replies, 11 respondents completed questionnaires and 7 others stated that they had no archives *per se*. For purposes of clarification and elicitation of additional information from both those who had responded and those who had not, agencies in Rome, Vienna, Geneva, Paris and Washington were further visited or consulted. All survey participants are listed in the Appendix.

Structurally, the study first explores appraisal criteria in terms of values that affect the preservation and disposal of records. Although developed toward the study's beginning and, therefore, outside the conclusion, they actually form part of the guidelines. There are two reasons for their placement and broad treatment. First is the futility of establishing guidelines to fit each organization. It is true that to some degree, there is similarity in records of international organizations because of their common institutional nature and purpose. All of these bodies, in one way or another,

deliberate; make recommendations and resolutions; initiate studies; receive and consider reports; supervise and monitor the execution of agreements; give technical assistance; dispense advice; and maintain contacts with other United Nations entities, Member States, non-governmental and private organizations, and external experts. However, because of variance in the mission and administrative hierarchy of each organization, such differences are also reflected in the records produced. Therefore, development of general guidelines that are adaptable to specific situations is the only viable means of presentation. Second, the positioning of general criteria as background to description of the appraisal experience within these organizations prevents the perimeters of experience from limiting those of the criteria. General inactivity in the field of appraisal, discovered during the course of the survey, would certainly have circumscribed the exposition of value standards.

Methodology of records selection is next treated as a complement to appraisal criteria, as it is the vehicle for records disposition according to established values. Such discussion also demonstrates the effect of arrangement and classification systems on selection.

A description of appraisal practices, based on questionnaires and on-site visits, follows. Both the issues of value and selection are involved, but another dimension appears. Status, resources, and authority of records offices may affect the results of appraisal, where exercised, almost as much as its methodology. For this reason the study's conclusions and guidelines touch on what seems, at first, to be peripheral to the main subject. However, because such topics are secondary they are treated only as they relate to the appraisal process and not in their entirety.

The author is indebted to Dr. Alf M.E. Erlandsson, Chairman of the ICA/SAIO and Project Director of the study, for his considerable support and advice; to Dr. Charles Kecskeméti of ICA for making initial arrangements

regarding the project; and to Dr. Frank B. Evans of Unesco for guiding it to its completion. Additional thanks go to Mr. Maynard J. Brichford, Mr. Meyer H. Fishbein, Dr. Markku Järvinen, Mr. Michael Roper, Ms. Marie C. Stark and Mr. Bernard Weilbrenner for their valuable assistance in reviewing the manuscript, and to Ms. Penelope B. Guptil for preparing it.

2. NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

2.1. Increase in Records

Alarm at the proliferation of paper in the twentieth century has been repeatedly expressed in terms of avalanches and floods. Using the latter as its metaphor, the British Records Association in 1943 attributed the trend to "the spread of the writing habit, the cheapening of paper and the invention of type-writing".1/ This explanation may seem rather quaint in light of sophisticated technological advances in paper duplicating techniques, but the "writing habit" continues. Records production has multiplied in proportion to institutional expansion associated with increases in population and the extension of the State.

World War I was the primary catalyst, as new governmental agencies were created for the mobilization of armies and regulation of related civilian sectors. After a major depression and disruptions of another world war, the role of government in general economic and social areas was confirmed and extended. The return of peace failed to reverse this trend. In fact, the collaboration of the United Nations and satellite bodies with a growing number of non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations has added to the multiplication of institutions and their bureaucratization. The Yearbook of International Organizations, 1983-84, includes almost 20,000 entries, resulting from an annual increase of between 20 and 40 new organizations from 1900 up to World War II and, thereafter, a yearly growth of between 100 and 200. Contact between governments and international organizations and the resultant bilateral and multilateral agreements have also contributed generously to the production of records.2/

The concurrent increase in documentation of institutional activities is an adjunct of growth itself, but it is also the result of a trend toward compartmentalization and specialization in organizational patterns. Many

offices, rather than one, are responsible for a programme, reflecting a myriad of interrelated functions such as planning, funding, staffing and the other phases of implementation. The involvement of multiple offices and the need for coordination translates into document duplication and the widespread dispersal thereof.

Statistical confirmation of this phenomenon in terms of annual records accumulation by national governments is staggering. Figures presented at the Eighth International Congress on Archives in 1976 showed annual shelf growth in high-ranging thousands of metres.3/ In stark contrast are records accumulation figures for international organizations, with an average growth rate of 3,400 linear feet (1,037 metres) for the United Nations Archives, one of the larger records repositories, and 18 linear feet (5.5 metres) for the UNDRO Registry, one of the smaller. The vast difference in growth statistics for records of national and international organizations does not necessarily ease the lot of records managers and archivists in the latter, as their budgetary, staff and storage resources are proportionally smaller. Also, allowing for some variance in records management and archival responsibilities of the national archives, staff in these institutions deal solely with semi-current and non-current records, whereas records and archives staff of international organizations generally deal with current records also.

2.2. Consequences

2.2.1. Office space crowded with records infrequently or never used hampers the conduct of the organization's business and takes space needed for records in current use. In extreme cases, the inviolability of records becomes secondary to frustrated administrators, who unofficially dispose of them. Removal of records to an interim storage facility, such as a records centre, helps to prevent sub rosa disposals and also brings about a considerable savings in

maintenance costs. A Unesco manual cited a saving of 75 percent in the North American national archives experience.4/

Costs are not eliminated altogether, however. because expenses are not limited to buildings and space. One archival institution estimated maintenance costs for one cubic foot of records over a twenty-year period at $600. Factored into this figure were additional costs of $65 for initial fumigation and accession preparations; $30 for a review of security-classifications; and $17 for annual storage, reference service, and preservation.5/ Costs will vary according to the local economy, but the above statistics properly take into account additional expenses associated with equipment and labour. If records and archives authorities were more selective in what they accept as having continuing value, staff could be redeployed from the transport, analysis, arrangement and description of records having tenuous value to the processing of the obviously valuable.

2.2.2. Ironically, conservative appraisals, or the tendency to avoid decisions for fear of destroying that which someone, at some time, might find interesting, can ultimately harm both the institution and the researcher whose interests the archivist tries to protect. The proportion of archival-quality records to the total volume of records produced by an organization tends to be small.6/ The burying of the valuable among the non-valuable is exacerbated by the absence of timely appraisal decisions and the resultant over-crowding of facilities where semi-current and non-current records are stored. The time and effort required to ferret out the valuable creates an irony whereby the completeness of documentation discourages research. Archivists become as frustrated as their researchers. Because the appraisal of records, especially those having a mixture of the ephemeral and the permanent, is difficult and time-consuming, decisions are further postponed. Awareness of the problem, rather than eliciting a solution, merely compounds it.

2.3. Current Solutions

Universal agreement on the need to control the seemingly endless flow of records and correlative problems of crowded and expensive space, waste of personnel, and eclipse of valuable documentation, does not insure a clear and universal solution or assignment of responsibility. In fact, the assumption of appraisal as an archival responsibility is relatively recent. In nineteenth-century Europe, administrators applied records selection criteria imposed by ministerial authorities, while archivists generally received and maintained the result. By the 1920's, however, archivists had acquired consultative status, officially recognized in the 1930's when the National Archives of the United States was granted the right to review disposal lists and archivists in Finland and France assumed legal responsibility for the destruction of records. As responsibility for appraisal, or at least a hand in records selection, accrued to archivists, so did the sentiments of the profession itself. Increasingly, it accepted Dr. T.R. Schellenberg's elevation of the archivist to final arbiter in appraisal decisions over Sir Hilary Jenkinson's proposition that "'none of the pruning processes is made the task of the Archivist'".7/

But records selection criteria have not been as apparent as archivists' willingness to assume the responsibility, and demands come from different quarters. On one hand are academics, each one advancing the preservation of documentation in his own field of expertise and seeing merit in every piece of paper. At the other extreme are administrators who view records in terms of immediate value or space costs and fail to envision a life for records beyond the office. An attempt to strike a balance between the two extremes states that "the impracticable test, theoretically maintained under the old disposition law, that records to be disposed of must have no permanent value or historical interest has fortunately given place to a more realistic test

that permits disposal if the value of the records in question is not sufficient to warrant the cost of their continued preservation".8/ This is not a absolute formula, however, as cost is weighed against value, and the determination of value is subjective. Like anyone else, archivists lack the clairvoyance to foresee all possible future applications for records produced in their time, and, although expected to rise above it, they are influenced by historiography and space considerations as are historians and administrators. Years ago, when archives facilities were ample, appraisal decisions were conservative and archivists were more hesitant in making disposals; conversely, when the use of original sources was not so fashionable as the syntheses of secondary sources, decisions were more liberal.9/ Standards continue to shift. Today's preoccupation with quantitative history and computer applications have created new research techniques, causing archivists to grapple with "data archives" and statistical sampling in order to preserve representative samples from vast quantities of these machine-readable records.10/ In recognition of such changes, one contemporary has observed that records "are destroyed in accordance with whatever standards apply at the time of their one and only appraisal. Archivists of the nineteenth century, if they could have foreseen what we routinely destroy in accordance with general schedules, might have been horrified; and similarly, archivists of the twenty-first century may be. But unless we save, as I wish we could, a record copy of every document, there is no way of appraising except according to what we at the time believe to be the correct standards".11/

Archival literature attempts to establish objective standards for assessing records on the basis of future institutional obligations and evidential and/or informational values. Standards for housekeeping records, whose basic universality of function and form cross organizational lines, are more easily prescribed than those for substantive records. General principles cannot

apply with any exactitude to each appraisal situation involving the latter, as part of the value determination depends on relative factors such as the purpose for which the organization exists and what other records it has produced. Such literature provides guidance in the setting of values, but value must still be measured in each case.

Supplementing appraisal theory are case studies of specific appraisal or sampling projects. Useful as descriptions of disposition procedures applied in a particular context, they provide details that archival theorists do not and cannot supply. But their worth depends on similarity of character and content between the profiled records and those about to undergo appraisal. Lessons drawn from such articles must be extrapolated with care before they are adapted to other bodies of records having their own peculiarities and relationships with other record groups.

If theoretical literature supplies too vague a standard for appraisal principles and case study literature is too specific, practices of the national archives, likely models for records and archives authorities of the relatively youthful international organizations, are characterized by their variety. In some countries, state archives are the repository of valuable documentation regardless of origin, where in others, documents produced in the private sector are outside the jurisdiction of the state. Regulations relating to records disposition are issued in different cases by Ministries or their equivalent, the Legislature, or the records-creating agencies, while the influence of archives authorities ranges from total to none at all. The management of records and files classification are closely monitored in some situations, while in others the influence of archivists is minimal. Some retention schedules cite records to be preserved, others list those to be destroyed and the remainder issue combinations of the two. Appraisal criteria range from "historical relevance" based on placement and importance of the

records-creating office, to satisfaction of legal and fiscal obligations, or potential research use. Recent surveys of national archives concerning the results of records destruction show that the above practices have yielded preservation percentages as low as 1 to 2 percent and as high as 98 percent.12/

Given the variety of roles and responsibilities of records and archives authorities in United Nations organizations and their resultant records, universal and standardized appraisal formulae cannot be devised. There is, however, a set of basic criteria that can be adjusted to individual systems so that records volume can be reduced without a concomitant reduction in integrity and value. Subjectivity cannot be totally eliminated because of the need to make judgments in adapting such criteria to the case at hand. But arbitrariness can at least be minimized.

NOTES

1/ British Records Association, Modern Records: What may we Destroy?, Memorandum No. 7 (London: British Records Association, 1943), p.1.

2/ Letter from Markku Jarvinen to the author, 23 December 1983.

3/ Åke Kronmow, "The Appraisal of Contemporary Records" (paper presented at the Eighth International Congress on Archives, Washington, 22 September - 1 October 1976), pp. 2-3.

4/ A.W. Mabbs with the collaboration of Guy Duboscq, The Organization of Intermediate Records Storage, Documentation, Libraries and Archives: Studies and Research, Vol. V (Paris: Unesco, 1974), p. 14.

5/ Gregory Bradsher, citing statistics of the Appraisal and Disposition Task Force, U.S. National Archives and Records Service (NARS), in a paper presented at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 19 - 21 May 1983.

6/ Preparatory to the 22nd International Conference of the Round Table on Archives, a questionnaire submitted to national archives and other federally-structured institutions showed that the percentage of records retained from the total accumulated ranged between 2 and 85 percent, with most respondents yielding rates between an "actual or ideal retention quota" of 5 and 10 percent, or between 20 and 40 percent. Eckhart G. Franz, compiler, "The Archivist and the Inflation of Contemporary Records" (preliminary report of the 22nd International Conference of the Round Table on Archives, Bratislava, 17 - 20 October 1983), p. 4. For results of earlier surveys, see Section 2.3. and Note No. 12.

7/ Hilary Jenkinson, "Roots," Society of Archivists, Journal, II (October, 1961), 136-37, and T.R. Schellenberg, Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 133, as

cited in F.B. Evans, "Modern Concepts of Archives Administration and Records Management," Unesco Bulletin for Libraries, XXIV (September - October, 1970), 295.

8/ G. Philip Bauer, "An Essay on the Appraisal of Current and Recent Records," (internal paper, NARS. 1946), p. 1.

9/ Meyer H. Fishbein, "Appraisal of Twentieth Century Records for Historical Use," Illinois Libraries, III (February, 1970), 156.

10/ James B. Rhoads, "New Archival Techniques," Archivum, XXIV (1974), 77-78.

11/ Leonard Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records," American Archivist, XLIV (Spring, 1982), 146.

12/ Kronmow, op. cit., pp. 4-12 and 24. Filip Ivanovic Dolgih, "La Liaison entre les archives d'État et les Archives Administratives," Archivum, XXIV (1974), 33-51.

3. APPRAISAL CRITERIA: STANDARDS OF VALUE

Appraisal has been defined as "the process of determining the value and thus the disposition of records based upon their current administrative, legal, and fiscal use, their evidential and informational or research value; their arrangement; and their relationship to other records".1/ Once such determinations have been made, disposition can take one of the following forms: "immediate disposal (i.e. destruction), disposal after a specified interval of time or upon the occurrence of a specified future event, disposal upon microfilming with permanent retention or the microfilm copy, or permanent retirement of the original records in an archival institution".2/

Appraisal occurs at different junctures in the life-cycle of records. The future disposition of records should be a factor in well-planned arrangement and classification systems, as well as in filing techniques, for beyond the immediate and practical reason for devising such systems, that of records retrieval, the exercise of rational controls over records during the early part of their life allows more efficient and effective decisions than the later appraisal of undisciplined records.

It also occurs when archivists review records inventories prepared by records managers and approve or disapprove of their disposition proposals, which normally include tentative retention periods and recommendations regarding the immediate fate of records in terms of destruction, or removal to an intermediate repository or an archives. The acceptance or rejection of records into an archives repository is the traditional and narrow exercise of appraisal.

Such decisions need not be eternal. Periodic reappraisals may be necessary after transfer to the archives facility because of overcrowding, changing value or material in light of new accessions, physical deterioration, earlier and overly-cautious appraisals, research experience and new uses of

records caused by adjustments in societal values, historical methodology and technological advances.3/

"Appraisal", therefore, is here used to mean the allocation of value to records at any time, before or after their transfer from the records-creating office. In all cases the same principles apply, but with different emphases.

3.1. Value

Records should be considered in terms of agency needs, or primary value, and thereafter in terms of evidential and informational content, or secondary value, which is their worth beyond immediate use to the records-creating organization. Operating needs are important considerations prior to the acceptance of records into the archives, where decisions bear more on the development of rational filing techniques and when removal of records from an office is justified. Unless it is obvious that records have no use beyond short-term agency needs and are scheduled for immediate disposal, more permanent appraisal decisions can be made later, according to evidential and informational value, when records are in the storage facility.

3.1.1. Primary Value

Records having primary value satisfy, singly or in combination, the current administrative, legal, fiscal and other operating needs of the agency that created them. Administrators familiar with agency needs and operations can be a valuable source of information in the process of determining when this value no longer applies. At the point where records may be removed from offices, archivists determine whether they have secondary value.

3.1.1.1. Administrative Value

Administrative value is the worth of a records to an agency in conducting its business. All records have administrative value at some time in their

lives, otherwise they would not have been created in the first place. Once an action is completed, there is no further administrative need for preservation, as in the case of a travel authorization where value expires upon the completion of the trip, or a requisition where value lapses upon the supply of the item requested, unless such records are needed for precedent purposes in determining future policy. Also, administrative vehicles such as directives and regulations retain their value until programmes are altered or dropped and such documents are superseded.

The loss of administrative value, which is normally of a relatively short-duration, does not mean automatic expiration of all primary value. Records often have administrative value in tandem with legal or fiscal value, the longest lasting of which determines the length of primary value. Travel authorizations and requisitions, for example, may lack further administrative value, but may have continuing value for financial audits.

3.1.1.2. Legal Value

Records having legal value bear on the legal rights or obligations of the organization and also on the rights of other organizations and of individuals to make claims against it for personal or property damage or the upholding of contractual rights or benefits. Leases, contracts, documents relating to claims and legal decisions are obvious examples, but the length of value is not uniformly apparent. While settlement of a legal issue may negate continuing value in some cases, in other instances, records must be preserved for a longer time because of lingering claims and entitlements to make such claims. Judgment should be exercised, for every shred of evidence cannot be preserved, and in selecting what should be kept, consideration should always refer to what is in the jurisdiction of the organization that has accumulated the document and not "all the limitless rights and interests that could be defended by their collateral use".4/

3.1.1.3. Fiscal Value

Records with fiscal value deal with budget matters and their implementation as financial transactions. They should be preserved as long as necessary to clarify financial transactions, satisfy audit requirements, assist in budgeting projections and fulfill legal obligations. As with legal records, therefore, the duration of value varies, depending on such factors as the status of a particular audit or the nature of the final record. The range of such records is broad, from vouchers, to collection and disbursement accounts, to general ledgers. A distinction ought to be made between routine transactions involving individual persons or institutions, for example, and financial policy records whose instructional value may be continuing.

3.1.2. Secondary Value

Once records have satisfied current agency needs, they may have continuing administrative, legal and fiscal values. Included also is the value that some records hold for the establishment and protection of rights and interests of the agency and those with whom it deals. Whether such records have secondary value because of the endurance of what were, at one time, primary values, or whether they are still considered as primary value records, is largely a question of semantics. In either case, such records should be maintained in an intermediate repository until their value expires. A portion of them will ultimately join other records having secondary evidential or information values.

3.1.2.1. Evidential Value

Records having evidential value are those that allow the reconstruction of an agency's history, its origins, structure, goals, decisions, procedures, operations and accomplishments. Every bit of evidence need not be preserved, but by "judicious selection of various groups and series an archivist can

capture in a relatively small body of records all significant facts on an agency's existence -- its patterns of action, its policies in dealing with all classes of matters, its procedures, its gross achievement".5/ Actually, evidential value is two-dimensional. Evidence on the organization can appear contextually within records, or external to them, for the way in which records were created, used and relate to each other are also illustrative of institutional operations. Certain records are prima facie evidential. Examples include directives, manuals, organizational charts, narrative and statistical reports, budget and audit reports, legal opinions and decisions, minutes of high-level staff meetings or advisory groups, correspondence of top-management and publicity material, such as press releases and speeches. These are needed to supplement annual reports and similar endeavours, which are skeletal, and sometimes glorifying, accounts of agency activities. Of these, minutes and agency directives most demonstrate "planning and direction", whereas correspondence and memorandums illustrate their implementation. Where functions are decentralized, planning and directional records are probably held in operational offices at the director level, depending on the degree of decentralization and the activities of organizational components and their independence in executing them. It is most difficult to ascertain where policy coming from above is augmented by mid-level offices exercising a degree of autonomy in a decentralized institution. Because of the tendency for "directing" records to move downward and implementational records to move upward, there is often duplication. It is important, then, to decide which is the office of action, or record, no matter what its level in the agency hierarchy. These records should be maintained; the others, if easily segregable, can be destroyed. Ideally administrators should have maintained record sets of the planning and direction genre; but where they did not, such records can be pieced together from other organizational components.6/

Special attention should be focussed on documentation of an international organization's origins, as it provides insight into conditions that gave rise to the institution. Initially, a new organization is often characterized by confusion in determining its responsibilities and plans until procedures are formalized. Therefore, early records are particularly illuminating. T.R. Schellenberg notes that "the quality of evidence per se is not the issue here, but the character of the matter evidenced" and that such documents "should be preserved regardless of whether there is an immediate or even foreseeable specific use for them".7/ Evidential records, as the title implies, provide evidence of the organization's past behaviour. To choose is to distort what actually was. Importance of the office is the test. However, at least one revisionist has questioned what is "important", placing significance on the future exploitation of records and questioning the merit in keeping evidence of every obscure commission ever created.8/

To this reservation should be added "non-rational factors" in the decision- making process, where it is prudent to "recognize that some records fulfill a purely ritual function; to understand that not all the policy decisions are made at the top of the organization, that conflicting policies can produce records reflecting quite different realities, and that outside forces in the organization's environment affect its records creation". Some of this is attributable to verbal direction-giving and the unofficial exercise of out-of-channels influence. Some high-ranking staff also "fulfill a purely ritual function", and much real power flows outside established chains of command. Therefore, relatively complete assemblages of evidential records, do not always mean complete administrative history.9/

Nevertheless, complete or partial, records preserved because of their evidential value serve as a precedent source for current administrators. Records on policy decisions and their implementation, successful or not,

provide the rationale behind them and reasons for their success or failure. Depending on the outcome of earlier experience, current administrators can draw on this material either to be guided by the past or to avoid its mistakes. Evidential records are of particular use to the archivist, because familiarity with the organization's administrative history is a tool in the organizational and functional analysis that contributes to appraisal decisions. It is also crucial to records arrangement and description.

3.1.2.2. Informational Value

Some records have both evidential and informational value. In such cases evidence on the workings of the records-producing organization exists. However, informational value derives not from the information on the organization, but from what the organization has collected on persons, places, events and things in the course of its operations.

Persons include people and corporate bodies such as boards, commissions and companies. Records relating to people in general are usually voluminous and repetitious, but information on specific individuals is generally not. For this reason, such records are not normally exploited for biographical purposes, but are used collectively for population, sociological or economic studies. Therefore, selected summaries are especially useful, as vast quantities of data appear in concentrated form. Sampling can also be applied, if the selection of a limited number of documents or case files accurately represents the whole. Where reliance is placed on summaries or samples, however, care must be taken to avoid the destruction of masses of individual documents that protect personal, legal, financial or civil rights for the duration of time that such rights exist. Records of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which closed in 1948, are still called upon to support individual social security and pension claims. Other examples are records relating to property or citizenship rights. As with records relating

to people, those pertaining to corporate bodies are generally useful in a collective sense, unless a single body is historically important.10/

Records relating to places, events and things have special traits as well. Cartographic records are an obvious source of information on places, although correspondence, reports, publications and other documentation may have information on topological, geological and geographical aspects of an area. Those pertaining to events and "phenomena" describe circumstances that affect persons and things. The application of appraisal criteria to a specific occurrence is not difficult, as the importance or the event and its repercussions are measured. This yardstick is more easily applied to distant events where the degree of influence is more obvious than to recent events whose impact is yet to be felt. However, decisions are much more difficult to make when information relating to events is presented in a statistical format dealing with sweeping economic or demographic trends. Special considerations inherent in machine-readable records or sampling may apply in such cases.11/

The expansive definition of informational value can complicate the appraisal of such records, as all have research value in some measure. The scholarly community has often expressed conservative views on the disposal of records for this reason. A recently commissioned study of documentary sources for future research in the social sciences is particularly significant because it addresses head-on the issue of appraisal vis-à-vis scholarly needs and also demonstrates preoccupation with an issue that remains unresolved. It concludes that disposal, by the very act of reducing records, violates provenance and the value of the remaining documentation. Not only is evidence of the records-producing institution's activities altered, but the reduction of unique informational elements gives its archives a tendentious character by providing a false picture of past reality. Furthermore, because trends in

future research are unpredictable, choices in the destruction of records will determine future research and the picture of current reality.12/

As the ultimate objective of archives is the preservation of material for future research, such views must be considered. But space and funds for preservation are not limitless, and all records cannot be kept. Research needs must be compromised with reality. Records produced by international organizations, because of their global character, do not ordinarily attract hobbyists, genealogists, local historians and others that share archival resources with scholars at more specialized and regional institutions. Even with a relatively homogeneous clientele coming from the scholarly community, or from government or journalistic circles, archivists affiliated with international organizations are forced to make decisions on the relative merits of records and, therefore, of research goals. The choice may not be between preservation of a centuries-old military record and a major report on soil management, but the archivist is thrust into the role of arbiter between scholarly claims. The primary consideration is the probability of the exploitation of records for "methodical and critical study aimed at the development of useful knowledge or significant conclusions"; unless space for current and anticipated holdings is limitless, records cannot be preserved because of some possible future "private" or "casual" interest.13/

In general, the measure of informational value involves uniqueness and consideration of the possibility that the information exists elsewhere, among other records of the organization or at other repositories; form, including the amount of data concentration and accessibility; and the potential type and importance of research that would require such information. Should the required information involve individual cases such as employment verification for pension eligibility purposes, all records of that type have equal value; however, samples could be sufficient where the information needed is

procedural, explaining how something was done. In determining the value of research, the archivist's training in history is critical, for acquaintance with historical methodology and bibliography, as well as imagination. provide the means by which to make such judgments to the degree that they can ever be made. One of the problems inherent in this exercise is the fact that "the purpose for which a record is consulted frequently has little or nothing to do with the purpose for which it was originally made".14/ It is difficult to cross the bridge from original purpose to possible use, particularly when records have been recently created and in light of new methods and styles of writing history. In these cases especially it can be wise to consult outside specialists in recognition of the archivist's inability to have in-depth expertise in all fields. Where such dialogues occur, there is the possibility of excessive zeal on the part of specialists to preserve documentation in their respective fields, as well as differences of opinion.

3.2. Measurements of Value

Primary value derives from agency need and does not require further measurement. The fact that it is needed in the conduct of agency affairs gives it sufficient value in and of itself. However, secondary value is not absolute and must be measured in terms of quality, although the standards of measurement differ for the two value types, evidential and informational.

3.2.1. Organizational and Functional Analysis

Evidential value depends on the degree to which records demonstrate the salient policies and programmes of an agency and their execution. Therefore, administrative analysis is necessary to identify an office's niche in the organizational pyramid, as well as its particular functions and authority. Some offices are simply more important than others, and the records they produce assume a similar status.

For records having informational value, the placement of the records-creating office, central to the appraisal of evidential records, is largely irrelevant, as the quality of informational content is divorced from its institutional context. Other measurements of value, however, are common to both.

3.2.2. Inherent Characteristics

Records being appraised for permanent value should be first assessed for evidential and informational value. Such judgments generally rely on criteria external to the records themselves: evidential value is weighed by relating records to the organization that produced them, and informational value is determined relative to their exploitability by users. Once it is decided that such value exists, characteristics peculiar to records are considered: uniqueness; for records having marginal value, the degree to which they fill gaps in other records; completeness; age; ratio of information to total volume; accessibility; and form. None of these should be the sole criterion for the disposal or preservation of records. In general, records should not enter an archives because they are unique, complete, old or accessible, but because they are one, or all, of these and important.

3.2.2.1. Duplication

Analyses of organizational structure and functions in order to appraise substantive records fail to solve the problem of overlapping or dovetailing office responsibilities that cause records duplication. There are two forms of duplication. One document can literally duplicate another, or the essential information in both can be the same. Clusters of carbon copies or photocopies are examples of literal duplication, as are bunches of regulations, directives and other similar administrative instructions filed together. For archival purposes the preservation of one or two copies is sufficient.

Duplication is not so obvious, however, when copies are dispersed. It is obvious that each document cannot be checked individually against all others to ascertain precise duplication. The tracking down of such duplication is neither time- nor cost-effective, although one clue is the percentage of certain kinds of documents in a series. Personal letters, diaries, summaries and final reports are more indicative of uniqueness than are mimeographed materials, circulars, forms and drafts.15/

Even where it is apparent that duplicates are common to records falling under different file designations or located in different records series, automatic disposal is not warranted, as their removal can destroy the meaning of the remaining records by undermining the organic relationship of the documents that make up the file designation or series. Discrete and readily isolatable series of duplicates are another story. The gap created by their disposal can be easily cross-referenced to the series in which they will be preserved. Caution must be exercised, however. Sometimes it is desirable to maintain identically composed series because of differences in arrangement. One may be arranged chronologically and the other alphabetically by correspondent, for example. In the absence of cross-reference indexes, research could be stymied because access information differs from the available access mode. Disposition of files duplicating those in "record sets" also requires care and judgment. Policy files, directives and reports at the highest levels of an agency are usually duplicated in lesser offices that also maintain them for purposes of guidance. Such files issued by the action office, or office of record, cumulatively become the official "record set" and merit permanent preservation. Duplicate sets maintained in operating offices can therefore be destroyed. If individual files from record sets are intermingled with implementational records, they give more meaning to the latter by adding to their context, as well as precluding the need to refer back to the separately-maintained record set. Therefore, if operational records are judged to have

continuing value, individual "record set" files among them should be left intact.

Content duplication is more difficult to ascertain than literal document duplication because it is less obvious. Analysis of organizational and functional inter-relationships, with special emphasis on direction of authority and transactions, help in the identification of such duplication.

In addition to internal duplication of records within an organization, there are instances of inter-organizational duplication. This occurs when several agencies have undertaken cooperative enterprises, or when information copies are circulated by one organization to others having interest. In such cases, "when records of intrinsic value are recommended for disposal on the single ground that their contents are adequately represented elsewhere, there is an implied assurance that the records whose existence is set up as a condition are in fact going to be preserved".16/ This should be investigated, especially where another organization is involved, as it may plan to destroy its parallel records on the same grounds.

3.2.2.2. Summarization or Publication Elsewhere

Summarization is closely related to duplication because both are facets of uniqueness. It is likely that operational office activities will be summarized in work statistics for purposes of budgetary justifications and incorporated into periodic or annual reports, feasibility studies or minutes of meetings. Summary documents of lower level activities maintained in high-level offices can eliminate the need to keep the more voluminous records from which the summaries were made, but after the nature of the summary information has been considered. The mere existence of a summary is not sufficient for the destruction of input documents. There is a big difference between summaries of low-level routine administrative activities and important work in economics, for example, although the data might have been computed at a minor

administrative level. Sometimes raw data supplied for a final summary report is significant in and of itself, because it contains more information, ancillary though it may be to the central theme of the report. There is the additional possibility that such data can be re-exploited, particularly in reference to increasingly voluminous machine-readable records whose reuse has raised the status of data in the appraisal process. Likewise, daily and weekly reports could be destroyed if monthly reports existed, but some important details could fall by the wayside, and summaries are vulnerable to the insertion of author biases.17/ To determine whether a summary and its supporting documentation should be preserved, the value of the difference between the contents of the summary and that of the background material should be evaluated.

3.2.2.3. Substitution Value

In cases where valuable records should have been preserved, but for some reason were not, lesser records must substitute. Alienation of records is most likely to occur in the absence of regulations forbidding their removal from the organization and is most threatening upon separation or retirement of a staff member, or where consultants are involved. Unfortunately, records removal is most likely to occur at the highest levels, such as the loss to the United Nations Archives of the first Secretary-General's papers, and a portion of those of his successor. Unofficial disposals caused by ignorance of regulations or administrators divesting themselves of excess paper are another cause of missing records. Examples of substitution are statistics and raw data for summaries, or operational records for those documenting policy and evaluation.

3.2.2.4. Completeness

Assessing the value of incomplete documentation is particularly subjective It is impossible to suggest a percentage range for acceptable

completeness because it is not just a matter of degree, but also a question of the quality of completeness. When records are sampled as an alternative to their destruction, the goal is to provide a reduction that "will reflect all of the characteristics of the original set of records".18/ Under controlled conditions, sampling has reduced vast quantities of homogeneous records and effected this goal with a high degree of precision. However, when parts of records series are missing because of accidental factors such as removal by staff, storage hazards or loss, it means that the remainder have been "selected" by chance rather than planned sampling procedures. Consequently, it does not meet the requirement of representing the whole. In fact, what remains can suggest a distorted presumption of what records once existed. The question, in this case, is simply whether "half a loaf is better than none". Is it better to keep whatever information can be gleaned from what is left, unrepresentational as it might be, than to destroy it? One manual instructs that "there must be enough examples over time to permit investigations of sufficient scope for drawing valid conclusions. Otherwise, archivists would be preserving isolated curiosities".19/ In considering disposal, however, it should be remembered that its destruction, distortions and all, will leave nothing at all.

3.2.2.5. Age and Scarcity

Some countries prohibit the destruction of records prior to a certain date, as so few of the old records have survived. However, this raises issues similar to those in the consideration of completeness. With some exceptions, government records and those of international organizations, for that matter, are not kept because of information about a specific person, region or isolated event, despite the wishes of genealogists, local historians or scholars to the contrary; rather, they are pieces of an organic whole created in the conduct of agency affairs and thereafter serving as evidence of what it did,

or did not, accomplish. To preserve fragmentary documentation is a concession to the informational usage of records. On one hand, antique and informational value is enhanced by scarcity, but on the other, documentary reflections of segments isolated in a larger time-frame can lessen the reliability of records in intellectual terms. Luckily, the youth of United Nations organizations make this difficult appraisal issue a theoretical one except in the few cases where they have inherited records from defunct predecessors. Among such records, where individual documents do not satisfy evidential or informational criteria, but have relic or pecuniary value simply because well-known persons might have authored them or they are early examples of what is now preserved, exceptions can be made.

3.2.2.6. Concentration of Information

The immersion of valuable records in masses of the non-valuable has been cited as provocation for action in the realm of appraisal. A records series replete with information is useless if the researcher cannot find it. If the two types of records have not been separated during their creation by means of classification, then, as an alternative to destruction, they can be weeded of the unimportant, providing the salvageable and unsalvageable materials are easily distinguishable from each other and the operation can be standardized. Candidates for weeding are "convenience" items, or those connected with the production and control of records.

3.2.2.7. Peripheral Materials

Often interspersed among agency records are materials that were acquired for convenience purposes, such as working papers maintained by officials for easy reference, extra copies of correspondence and other documents, extra copies of publications or printed documents and materials ancillary to the production or flow of documents. One records management seminar identified

a very common practice whereby "almost every government official has filing cabinets containing documents or copies of documents, printed material and other information pertaining to his immediate work. It is informational stuff and no action is required in connection with it.... Such material is always accumulated in large quantities. It is always classified in relation to a particular field of interest, or a particular field of knowledge, and not in relation to any transaction, activity, or organization, as are the great mass of records produced".20/ Normally, these can be disposed of because action or official copies are maintained elsewhere among agency records.

Typical of convenience copies are chronological files, which are copies of outgoing correspondence arranged by date; reading files that contain general-interest information for an office, like bulletins, notices, clippings and selected correspondence; "tickler" files serving as reminders that follow-up action is necessary; duplications of an entire records series, with different arrangements for ease in retrievability; and stock supplies of extra sets of printed documents or publications.

Ancillary materials include those used to produce official records or to control them, such as notes, drafts, letters of transmittal, routing slips and reproduction materials. Also included are stencils, transcriptions and stenographic notes or tapes. Because they are all readily identifiable, they are likely candidates for weeding. The other criterion for this process is a sufficient number of weedable items; otherwise, it is not worth the time, effort or expense. Occasionally, however, some of these materials have value depending on the existence and quality of official records. Letters of transmittal and routing slips can clarify whether particular individuals have seen a specific record and sometimes contain opinions about the item transmitted; notes or drafts can offer more information than the abbreviated version that eventually becomes the final product; and chronological files, as an alternate

arrangement to records series not arranged by date, can provide another means of access as well as back-up when items in a subject file, for example, may have been misfiled. But reasons for the keeping of chronological files must be balanced against the cost of their continued preservation; they should not be retained to compensate for inadequately created and maintained records.

3.2.2.8. Arrangement

In addition to small informational content, lack of coherent order blocks access to records and precludes their retrievability. If an ordered finding aid accompanies the unordered records to which it relates, the problem is solved. The fact that each document has no relationship to those adjacent is irrelevant as long as the finding aid, a cross-index for example, is arranged coherently and provides information that renders the document retrievable. When the "original order" of records series and their finding aids are in disarray to the degree that there is an absence of order, archivists can embark on rearrangement, especially where records have informational rather than evidential value. Arguments against rearrangement hang primarily on negative cost-effectiveness and respect pour l'ordre primitif. However, if records were accumulated and maintained in disorder, their value as evidence of the working of the originating office is questionable, unless the records-producer, itself, operated chaotically. Furthermore, the evidential content of records is superior to the evidential value of order, and if the latter obscures the former, the primary purpose of the records is negated. The order resulting from rearrangement will not satisfy all users, but lack of order in the old arrangement will satisfy no one.21/

3.2.2.9. Non-Conventional Records

Non-conventional records, including photographs, film, sound recordings, cartographic materials and the machine-readable, are generally judged by the

same criteria that apply to their textual counterparts, but require some special consideration in light of their different characteristics.

3.2.2.9.1. Photographs, Film and Sound Recordings

These media must be of sufficient quality to merit preservation. If visually or audiologically warped so that the subjects are not visible, or so garbled so as not to be heard, there is no purpose in keeping them. Still photographs, in particular, cannot be judged by normal duplication standards, as several views of the same subject can "provide a more complete pictorial description of a subject", and their spread over a period of time may "have a cumulative value".22/

3.2.2.9.2. Cartographic Records

Maps are normally part of the general classification scheme that orders an agency's textual records, with each serving as a supplement to the other. Because of this close relationship and the fact that they have been created in the course of the agency's business, they are also appraised by primary and secondary considerations. They can advance legal rights, demonstrate official policy and provide information on historical events, and, uniquely, on past landscapes. Those having archival value are imprinted maps, normally manuscript maps that bear annotations indicating changes or approval; individual maps complementary to textual records among which they are filed; record sets of all printed maps produced by the agency; and textual documentation such as specification and source materials involved in the preparation of archival quality maps.23/

3.2.2.9.3. Machine-Readable Records

General appraisal standards are applicable to machine-readable records, but with deviation from usual duplication of content standards and with

special attention given to their technical characteristics. Technical developments and academic trends have significantly altered measurements of informational content in terms of this documentary medium. In the past few decades, there has been a movement toward the collection of automated data to support the development of trends over long time-periods. Economists pioneered in the field, followed by historians, who combined the "techniques of psychology, political science, sociology, economics, and demography to examine social and geographic mobility, attitudes and opinion, the structure of society, urban development, and the like" through the gathering of voluminous data. The technical ability to compress data into a small medium has furthered this tendency, as has its manipulability into different arrangement patterns and its re-exploitability.24/

Two considerations have especially altered normal appraisal criteria. The "secondary analysis" of information, or the ability to re-exploit it in order to answer old questions with better data, or answer "new questions with old data", expands the range of its future possible use far beyond that for traditional records. The other consideration is the "level of analysis inherent in the numeric documentation. Unlike aggregations or summaries, information collected at the lowest level retains enormous potential for use in a wide variety of statistical analyses, frequently not even considered at the time of collection". If collected at a higher level, its research usage changes, "and, of course, it is not possible to disaggregate down to a micro level from a macro level".25/

During appraisal, machine-readable records must meet certain standards, many of which are technical. Basically, it must be correctly documented with record layout, codebook and explanation of information in the file. It should also be ninety-five percent legible. Archival appraisal standards are then applied, although evidential value is not usually a criterion, as textual

records are generally superior in this regard. Machine-readable records are mainly appraised for informational content, with emphasis on the degree of information on individual persons, places and things. Unlike textual records, non-tabulated data has higher value than summaries. Linkage to other machine-readable records also enhances worth. Once it has been determined to have sufficient archival value, a sample printout must be compared to the textual record layout and codebook. The degree of duplication should be ascertained, as machine-readable records are highly duplicable in other data archives and also in other textual files or published reports. Finally, their availability, arrangement, and cost of maintenance must be considered. If these do not detract significantly from the records' archival and technical value, the records should be preserved.26/

NOTES

1/ Frank B. Evans, Donald F. Harrison, and Edwin A. Thompson, "A Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers," American Archivist, XXXVII (July, 1974), 417.

2/ Morris Rieger, "Modern Records Retirement and Appraisal Practice," Unesco Journal of Information Science, Librarianship and Archives Administration, I, No. 3 (1979), 202.

3/ Letter from Marie C. Stark to the author, 11 December 1983.

4/ Bauer, op. cit., p. 12.

5/ T.R. Schellenberg, "The Appraisal of Modern Public Records," Bulletin No. 8 (Washington: NARS, 1956), p. 8.

6/ Records Disposition Workshop, Evaluation; Part II of Summary of Training Course on Records Disposition (Washington: General Services Administration, 24 October - 4 November 1955), p. 8.

7/ T.R. Schellenberg, NARS Bulletin No. 8, p. 7. The term "document" is interchangeable with "record item". "Printed documents" are so defined.

8/ Rapport, op. cit., 147-49.

9/ Michael A. Lutzker, "Max Weber and the Analysis of Modern Bureaucratic Organization: Notes Toward a Theory of Appraisal," American Archivist, XLV (Spring, 1982), 129.

10/ T.R. Schellenberg, NARS Bulletin No. 8, pp. 27-34. U.S., National Archives and Records Service, Disposition of Federal Records (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1981), pp. 21-22.

11/ T.R. Schellenberg, Ibid., pp. 34-44.

12/ Rolf Nygren, Jan Larsson and Sune Åkerman, Samhällsdokumentation infor framtiden (Stockholm: LiberFörlag, 1982), pp. 243-68.

13/ Records Disposition Workshop, op. cit., p. 2.

14/ W. Kaye Lamb, "The Changing Role of the Archivist," American Archivist. XXIX (June, 1966), 6.

15/ Maynard Brichford, Archives and Manuscripts: Appraisal and Accessioning, Basic Manual Series (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977), p. 8.

16/ Bauer, op cit., p. 4.

17/ Kronmow, op cit., p. 12.

18/ R. Michael McReynolds, "Statistical Sampling to Preserve Records," (internal paper, NARS, 1976), p. 3.

19/ Brichford, op. cit., p. 8.

20/ Records Management Seminar. Minutes of Sessions (Canberra, July, 1954), p. 8.

21/ Frank Boles, "Disrespecting Original Order," American Archivist, XLV (Winter, 1982), 29-30. It has been pointed out that "provenance" and "respect pour l'ordre primitif" have often been confused. The former concept concerns the manner in which records were created, while the latter concerns filing systems. Additions to, or subtractions from, a body of records generated by an organizational entity affect provenance, but internal reordering of individual items does not. Richard C. Berner, Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: A Historical Analysis (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1983), p. 4.

22/ Brichford, op. cit., p. 4. For a detailed analysis of the appraisal of film, see Sam Kula, The Archival Appraisal of Moving Images: A RAMP Study with Guidelines, General Information Programme and UNISIST, PGI-83/WS/18, (Paris: Unesco, 1983), pp. 1-130.

23/ Ralph E. Ehrenberg, "Cartographic Archives: A Perspective" (study copy, NARS, n.d.), pp. 2-7.

24/ Fishbein, op. cit., 160.

25/ Charles M. Dollar, "Quantitative History and Archives," Archivum, XXIX (1982), 49-52.

26/ Thomas E. Brown, "Appraisal of Machine-Readable Records," (internal paper developed for the Machine-Readable Branch, NARS, 1982), pp. 4-6.

4. RECORDS SELECTION: THE APPLICATION OF APPRAISAL CRITERIA

Setting standards of value for the disposition of records is but part of the appraisal process. Each record cannot possibly be reviewed individually because of time and budgetary constraints, nor would it be desirable, as records should be judged in relation to others. The other facet of appraisal is, then, the methodology of selecting records for preservation or destruction. The efficacy of selection is closely connected to systems of records arrangement and classification.

4.1. Records Systems

The alternative to haphazard records maintenance is the grouping of individual documents into dossiers, and dossiers into larger aggregations held together by a system of arrangement. Such systems can take the form of a centralized registry in which records of the agency and controls over them are assembled together; a decentralized registry in which organizational components maintain their own records and controls, but under a registry classification format; or a self-indexing decentralized system in which offices arrange their own records as needed. Variations on these basic systems include centralized registry control with physical decentralization, or the placement of records having general interest beyond that of the immediate records-creating office under registry control with facilitative records and large masses of case and transactional working files maintained in offices.

4.1.1. Registry

These classification possibilities are actually variations on two basic systems: registry and decentralized non-registry. Classic registry functions have included receipt, registration, codification, circulation, dispatch and maintenance of incoming and outgoing correspondence. By their attachment to correspondence, whether received from outside or circulated internally,

non-correspondence such as reports, summaries, proposals and an assortment of other formats enter the registry. Incorporated with the registry, or coexisting outside of it, are assemblages of case files which contain documentation relating to a specific transaction. Because of their number and the variety of subjects, record types and origin of documentation, such files are sometimes maintained separately from the registry in numerical sequence of transaction, alphabetically by name where files relate to individuals or corporations, or some other arrangement that allows easy retrieval. Other records existing outside the registry because of volume, the need for operating efficiency or exclusive handling of an activity by one department, are cables, minutes, accounting records, personnel files, maps and plans and assorted housekeeping records. Documents requiring confidentiality stay outside as well. Registries generally classify records according to subject, with related subjects grouped together under a broad subject matter "series" or "theme". Subjects are open to further breakdown by secondary subjects and, sometimes, by source. The advantage of a registry system is the imposition of control over the movement of documents through the organization, so that one dossier includes all documents relating to a particular activity and the need for duplicate documentation in each office involved is eliminated. In theory, the registry becomes the single and complete record of the organization, with the exception of facilitative, confidential and, sometimes, case files. However, inter-office coordination involved in executing the organization's programmes and the designation of a single file code to a subject breakdown means batching of individual documents generated by several offices, some of which lack long-term value.1/ The other handicap is that, because records are not broken down organizationally within subject themes, records created by non-substantive offices are not always easily isolated. As registries lessen the ability to assign value by means of source identification,

distinctions between subjects having prevalent substantive, facilitative. policy, or operational character, through use of the registry classification scheme, become especially important.

4.1.2. Decentralized Non-Registry

In contrast to the registry is the decentralized non-registry system whereby records are created, received and maintained within each administrative unit and arranged in records series, which are groups of documents having a coherent relationship with each other in terms of subject, activity or record type. There is a lack of uniformity in filing patterns and a tendency towards records proliferation, as each administrative unit keeps copies of documentation relating to an activity in which several of them may have been involved, but records are identifiable by source. Office of origin plays a primary role in selection of records for disposition.

4.2. Theoretical Considerations

The separation of records created in one administrative unit from another is actually an application of respect des fonds and its corollary, provenance. Originating in Europe, these principles applied to the arrangement of records after their accession by archival institutions. Established in France in 1841, respect des fonds was an antidote to the attempts of archivists to mix records of varied institutional origins into artificially-created classification schemes according to subject, date or other pattern, thus ignoring any natural interrelationships arising out of their creation. This principle upholds the separation of records created by one body from those created by another. Its practical application, however, has not always been so clear, as there has not been unanimity on the point at which records constitute a fonds. Recently the "maximalist" and "minimalist" positions of respect des fonds have been defined, whereby "the former position consists in defining

fonds at the highest level, by considering that the true unity of function... is situated at the top" so that all records of whatever administrative level emanating from a Ministry or its equivalent constitute a fonds; the latter, however, reduces "the fonds to the level of the smallest possible functional cell, by considering that the true organic 'whole' of archives results from the work of this small cell", so that several fonds may exist within a fonds. Provenance, is a refinement of respect des fonds that upholds the grouping of records within a fonds according to their administrative origins.2/

Although opinions differ over their application, the theory behind these principles is clear. The widely-translated manual of S. Muller, J.A. Feith and R. Fruin stated that an "archival collection comes into being as the result of the activities of an administrative body or an official, and ... it is always the reflection of the functions of that body or of that official".3/ Unlike an arbitrary accumulation of historical manuscripts, "an archival collection is an organic whole, a living organism, which grows, takes shape, and undergoes changes in accordance with fixed rules".4/ Referring to the common practice of rearranging records into alphabetical or chronological patterns, they proposed that "the system of arrangement must be based on the original organization of the archival collection which in the main corresponds to the organization of the administrative body that produced it".5/ Thus, records are not merely useful for the information that they contain, but because their own organic character reflects the functions of the organization, or "organism", that created them.

Theoretical discussions of respect des fonds and provenance have revolved around the arrangement of records in archival institutions. However, theories of archival arrangement have significant implications for records appraisal. If the organic nature of records reflects the character of the organization that produced them, then organizational structure and the relative importance

and functions of its administrative components bear on the value of records. Moreover, if records arranged according to administrative origin can be further separated into substantive and facilitative groupings each of which is subdivided into policy or operational transactions, the ability to separate records according to value is made easier.6/ Records are scaled so that those classified as substantive-policy have the highest status and facilitative-operational, the lowest. The origin of records, then, is a partial determinant of value, and classification schemes that ignore source make it more difficult to judge whether records have sufficient value to merit further preservation.

4.3. Selection in Decentralized Non-Registry Systems

It has already been established that decentralized non-registry systems allow identification of records according to office of origin and therein, according to series, which are groupings of records related by subject, activity, or format. An organic relationship, therefore, exists among the records themselves, as well as between them and the records-producing office. Through identification of records on the basis of source, recognition of organic relationships, analysis of the agency's structure and relative importance and functions of each administrative unit, records can be appraised at the series, rather than dossier, level. Although this is most meaningful in terms of evidential value, an understanding of administrative functions can bear also on where in the organization records with informational value exist, for, excepting offices whose functions consist of data-gathering, those with the most substantive functions and influence will most likely produce records of historical and informational interest.

This leads to automatic accessioning of major policy and programme records produced at the top of the organizational pyramid and minimal accessioning of housekeeping records at its base, excepting certain personnel and

other case files with continuing primary value.7/ It is fairly easy to segregate routine records involving vendors and contractors, for example, from substantive records such as basic agency directives, minutes of primary boards and commissions or data researched in top-echelon offices.

Unfortunately, arrangements that identify records by source cannot totally meet appraisal demands. Sandwiched between these hierarchical extremes are operational offices, which within themselves consist of mini-pyramids, with directors paralleling the agency head and the more facilitative components at the bottom. Functions often merge in these middle-echelon offices, where activities and transactions overlap with those of other offices involved in the implementation of policies and procedures directed from above. In fact, mid-level policy records are particularly elusive because their broad application makes categorization into identifiable file units difficult. Further, policy records remain in effect longer than the individual transactions that implement them. Because of the interaction between policy and implementational activities and transactions, records reflecting the former permeate records reflecting the latter, so that the substantive and routine are often mixed together. Unfortunately, there is no neat formula to solve the core of the archivist's dilemma which is to separate the general from the particular, the important from the trivial and the valuable from the ephemeral.8/

However, separation of records series resulting from systematic records arrangement and maintenance, in combination with a study of hierarchical structure and function, helps considerably in the sorting out of this maze. T.R. Schellenberg, assuming that classification schemes reflect agency organizations and functions, concluded that the records so classified could be disposed of in terms of organization and functions. Following this theory, he advised the posing of certain questions.

1. Which organizational units in the central office of an agency have primary responsibility for making decision regarding its organization, programs, policies, and procedures? Which organizational units carry on activities that are auxiliary to making such decisions? Which record series are essential to reflect such decisions?

2. To which functions of an agency do the records relate? Are they substantive functions? Which record series are essential to show how each substantive function was performed at each organizational level in both the central and field offices?

3. What supervisory and management activities are involved in administering a given function? What are the successive transactions in its execution? Which records pertain to the executive direction, as distinct from the execution of the function? To what extent are such records physically duplicated at various organizational levels? Which records summarize the successive transactions performed under the function? Which records should be preserved in exemplary form to show the work processes at the lower organizational levels?9/

These questions of relationship between mid-echelon and higher-ranked offices are much the same as those between field or branch offices and parent offices and have implications for appraisals affecting outposted records. In appraising the records of both intermediate and field offices the amount of discretionary action allowed vis-à-vis superior offices should be measured. Where the latitude is small, records will mirror to a great degree those records in parent offices. Where there is operational freedom, it is possible that substantive and unique information will exist; but it also can mean that major alterations in policy and procedures or noteworthy events will be channelled upward, creating duplication.10/ If they do contain unique information and thereby reflect a significant degree of independence, such records should be appraised more stringently in terms of informational concentration as compensation for their lower administrative rank.11/

Selection of records for preservation in decentralized non-registry systems is neither simple, nor is it always clear, but organizational and functional analysis lessens segmental appraisal, where records are considered in a vacuum with the appraiser literally picking his way through dossiers and

judging them on their own apparent merits. On principle, this is undesirable, and the volume of records needing appraisal make it a de facto impossibility. They cannot even be analyzed solely within the context of the immediate office that produced them. Rather, they must be viewed in relation to the agency as a whole.

4.4. Selection in Registry Systems

4.4.1. Central Registry

Registries lessen the problem of records duplication, prevalent in decentralized non-registry systems, but they also eliminate, within their frame of reference, office of origin, or source, as a major factor in appraisal decisions. Respect des fonds and provenance are upheld in the sense that records of one institution are not intermixed with those of another. But, within the fonds, provenance is not honoured, and organic relationship exists within the subject file itself rather than among subject files. Records from a variety of offices within the organization are filed together under a common subject breakdown, and it is to the general subject theme that the files are anchored, so that adjacent subjects in the classification scheme are unrelated. While linkage exists vertically between subjects tiered in secondary and tertiary breakdowns, the relationships still rest on subject. The placement of records according to subject necessitates their disposition on the basis of individual informational merit at the file level. In this context, evidential character of records changes. Its value proceeds from the informational content of files most heavily concentrated under such general themes as "organization", or those dealing with the substantive programmes or functions of the agency. The absence of administrative parentage neutralizes the ability of records to render indirect evidence of the way in which the organization conducted its affairs.12/

4.4.2. Decentralized Registry

Decentralized registry systems should be considered separately as a compromise between the central registry and decentralized non-registry systems. The characteristics of a central registry operate within its perimeters, but the fact of its decentralization reduces the fonds and resuscitates provenance. Identification according to records-creator is made possible, for example, at the division level. Analysis of records is not as facile as in a decentralized non-registry system, where source is reduced to office of origin at its lowest level, but a decentralized registry allows some exercise of provenance. Convergence of provenance with analysis of records arranged in organic groupings eases, although it does not solve, the difficult task of appraisal.

4.5. Case Files

Case files usually appearing as lengthy self-indexing or arbitrarily classified sequences in both registry and non-registry systems, are special because of their character and volume. Such files contain documentation on specific transactions, persons, projects, places or other subject. Because of their inclusive nature, they are often characterized by diversity of content, the unifier being the subject to which each file item relates. Adding to the difficulty of their appraisal and disposition is the possible interest of each file component to someone, often involving legal or other rights. Their volume poses a particular problem as one of their most visible traits is the amount of space they occupy. Therefore, the balance of sufficient continuing value against cost of further preservation is especially pertinent in deciding the disposition of such records after their primary value has lapsed, and, sampling, if appropriate to the records at hand, is a particularly attractive alternative to total retention or destruction.

NOTES

1/ "Code" is synonomous with "file designation" or "file number".

2/ Michel Duchein, "Theoretical Principles and Practical Problems of Respect des Fonds in Archival Science," Archivaria XVI (1983), 69.

3/ S. Muller, J.A. Feith, and R. Fruin, Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1940), p. 19.

4/ Ibid.

5/ Ibid., p. 52.

6/ T.R. Schellenberg, Modern Archives, p. 54.

7/ Paul Lewinson, "Toward Accessioning Standards--Research Records," American Archivist, XXIII (July, 1960), 298.

8/ T.R. Schellenberg, Modern Archives, p. 52.

9/ Ibid., pp. 144-45.

10/ G. Philip Bauer, op cit., p. 8.

11/ Ibid.

12/ The term "record parentage" is used by Richard C. Berner, op cit., pp. 59-66.

5. ASPECTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION EXPERIENCE

The study of appraisal practices in international organizations yielded more than information on the criteria and methodology of selecting records for disposition. Consultation with a number of records officers confirmed that appraisal cannot occur as a theoretical and intellectual exercise independent of the reality of the systems in which records are arranged or classified, and the need for a total records programme to cover all records during the whole of their life-cycle was underscored.

Records must exist in order to be appraised, certain information about them must be available to appraisers, and decisions are useless without means of implementation. Otherwise, an illegitimate form of "appraisal" occurs, with disposal resulting from the alienation of records rather than rational grounds. With this in mind, records and archives officers were queried also on points ancillary to the actual application of value to records, such as the resources of the records offices in terms of status, jurisdiction and staffing; authority vis-à-vis operating offices and implementation of disposition programmes; and methods of information gathering.

5.1. Records Offices: Placement in the Organization, Functions, Staffing and their Relationship to the Appraisal Process

Placement in the organizational hierarchy determines status and power. Such considerations have implications for the role of the records offices in appraisal, as it is widely recognized that they do not always enjoy the full cooperation of records-creating offices in satisfying their obligations vis-à-vis filing and records control, or in obtaining information from administrators sufficient for intelligent appraisal decisions. Likewise, the functions and responsibilities of such offices affect the degree of their jurisdiction over records. With narrow registry functions, for example, they lack authority over records created outside this limited framework. However, broad power

and responsibility is of little use if records personnel lack the background in education and training necessary for making appraisal decisions.

5.1.1. Placement in the Organization

The appraisal function in international organizations, when not surrendered to operating offices, is generally vested in archives, records management and/or registry units organizationally placed under General or Administrative Services. These services normally conduct facilitative activities related to purchasing, transportation, commercial and buildings management, finances and communication. Because of the organizational connection with disparate functional units and the housekeeping connotation of "keeping records in order", registries, records management and archives functions are ordinarily not accorded much status by the organization and, frequently, the maintenance of records and preservation of documentation on the organization's mission and effectiveness seem not so immediate as the timely delivery of equipment or upkeep of buildings. This ranking, in terms of status and immediacy, is reflected in the often diminutive influence exercised by archives and registries on records programmes in the various organizations.

There are exceptions, such as Unesco's incorporation of its Archives Section into the Division of the Library, Archives and Documentation Services, with the Registry Division attached to the General Services Bureau; the Central Library, Documentation and Archives Services of ITU and GATT's Registry, which are attached to the executive officer; and the Records Division of IMF, which is in the Secretary's Department. UNDRO's Registry and Mail Unit was part of the Co-ordinator's Office until its removal to the Administrative Support Unit in 1980. Attachment to the library as a co-equal is a means of avoiding budget reductions that might occur if the records and/or archives unit were administratively unconnected, but subordination to it is undesirable because of disparity in archives-library functions. Linkage to the executive

officer, or similar authority, is highly attractive, however, because such exposure confers more clout upon the records office and greater access to substantive records having archival value.

5.1.2. Functions

There is more variety in the nomenclature and functions of records offices than in their placement within the organizational hierarchy. Respondents had various titles, singly or in combination, including "registry", "records management" or "archives". Classic registry functions include receipt, registration, codification, circulation and maintenance of incoming and outgoing correspondence. Records management, a relatively modern concept, concerns the creation and control of all the organization's current, semi-current, and non-current records and their disposition, including the drafting of retention schedules subject to the approval of archives. Its involvement spans the entire life-cycle of records until such time that they pass into archival custody or are destroyed. The term "archives" denotes records having enduring value, and archival functions include all aspects of preserving,"processing" and servicing them.

The minimal size of the units responsible for records and archives in the international organizations has blurred the classic functional distinctions, although some differentiation is discernible. For example, GATT is a small organization, where operational files are kept in a central Registry attached directly to the Cabinet of the Director-General. Despite the title of the Registry and Archives Unit, there are no separately identified and maintained archives as yet in WMO, although proposals for such have been submitted. This unit performs typical registry functions, but records are maintained in the departments, and their transfer to the records office is in a storage connotation. Records units in UNICEF, UNDP, IMF and the World Bank have general

authority over records maintained centrally and/or in the departments, including active oversight of filing systems and records disposition. Records management staffs in UNDP and UNICEF have been, until recently, passive, functioning as a conduit for non-current records from offices to storage facilities. Both organizations are reconsidering their programmes in light of alarming increases in records and consequential storage problems. The UN and Unesco records offices most closely approach the prototypical definition of archives, as these staffs deal only with non-current records. In both cases, however, there is a close relationship with current-records officials, as the UN Archives is positioned under the Records Management Service and the Unesco archives cooperates closely with the Registry, although for financial and administrative reasons they are unconnected. Having no archives per se are UPU, WIPO and ECA. UPU records are the responsibility of several officers who normally perform other functions. WIPO lacks an archives unit, and records are dispersed among the Registry, the Library, which maintains official documents, and the operating offices, which maintain records according to their needs without any regulations. ECA's operational divisions maintain their own filing systems and reference units, and the Communications and Records Unit functions as a communications and dispatch unit. Records offices of the remainder, most of which are labelled "registries" or include such in combination with other units, maintain current and non-current records. Whether centralized, de-centralized or a combination of both, inactive registry files become the "archives". In some cases, an attempt is made to distinguish between non-current files and non-current files having long-term value, in which case the two categories are stored separately.

Thus, while the tendency in international organizations is to allocate records offices to the administrative sector, there is no clear pattern in terms of functions and responsibilities. Registries deal with current and

non-current records rather than traditional correspondence control and thus perform records management functions. Where registries and records managers determine which records have continuing value and maintain the result, they assume archival functions. And archives units, by dealing with all non-current records rather than those having enduring value, undertake records management functions. In extreme cases, there are no formal allocations of responsibility. However, in no case does a records office function purely as an archival unit.

5.1.3. Staffing

Most persons interviewed complained of understaffing and that, as a consequence, appraisal activities had become secondary to those required for daily current records operations. Appraisal is also affected by the post classification, education and training of records staffs. Approximately fifteen percent of records office personnel are professional, and the same percentage is general service staff performing secretarial functions. The remainder are general service staff who work specifically with records, although there is some overlapping of secretarial and records functions. In eight of the organizations the only professional was the unit head, and in five there were no professionals, although some respondents did not address this issue. Half of those serving as unit heads had no university degree. Separate from university training, sixteen staff had formal archival training. Most training occurs on-the-job, however, with minimum exposure to other records systems whereby to compare and adjust techniques. Occasionally, professionals with university degrees have been assigned the revamping of records and archives programmes, but have been selected for administrative or other reasons rather than for experience in records or archives.

The implications for records appraisal are several. In the records creation stages, the establishment of classification systems requires a sophisticated analysis of what can most efficiently promote control over records and allow maximum retrievability while simultaneously separating the ephemeral from the valuable. Extensive experience, preferably in a variety of records systems, and logic can compensate for a lack of formal university education and archives training in the management of records, but their absence will be apparent in the appraisal process where knowledge of research methodology and historiography are essential to making judgments. Furthermore, to encourage the exchange of views on records and their values between administrative and records officials there must be professional parity between the two.

5.2. Records

5.2.1. Systems

In general, records of the international organizations fall into two categories: registry, or individual systems devised and maintained in the operating offices. Registries, centralized or decentralized, represent the substantive records of the organization. Therefore, their contents have far exceeded the classic correspondence registry, and by attaching themselves to internal and external correspondence, reports, studies and other substantive materials that do not strictly conform to "correspondence" enter the system. The current substantive records systems of most international organizations take this form, with the exceptions of IMF, the World Bank, UNICEF and the UN Secretariat, which have decentralized non-registry systems.

However, because registries cannot possibly absorb large aggregations of voluminous records series such as budget and fiscal records and case files, many organizations have collateral records systems which may, or may not, be

under the direction of the records office. UNHCR's individual case files are maintained outside the Registry, but the unit maintaining them is a component of the records office. For UNDRO, however, where approximately ninety percent of records enter the Registry, some financial control papers and data bank records remain outside the registry and its control. Likewise, budget and fiscal records of ILO, UNCTAD and WHO are non-incorporated, as well as WHO's technical records on disease activities. The existence of separate departmental files and recognition of their potential value is recognized by many records offices. Unesco's general manual claims them for the archives, and IAEA plans to incorporate them into a unitary system under computer-coded control. Others recognize their existence, but see no possibility of capturing and evaluating them. Some records offices are alarmed at the separate existence of top-echelon office records which have escaped their custody. Records of the Director-General of WHO and UNHCR, because of confidentiality, are outside records office control, as are those of UNCTAD's Director. In the latter case, however, at least some of this correspondence is routed to and registered in the central registry. Still, there is no assurance that all of it eventually enters the system. FAO is certain that it has lost not only records of its executive officer, but those of other high-ranking personnel, and many other respondents suspect the same. This is a serious problem, as such records are the heart of the organization's administrative history. Further, UNIDO's Office of Public Information keeps a parallel archives consisting of records that are largely audiovisual.

Decentralized non-registry systems prevail in the IMF, World Bank, UN Secretariat and UNICEF. Of these, the IMF system is most like a registry because of its Central Files system, arranged according to subject and identified by alpha-numeric code. Although the registration procedures followed by registries do not operate in this context, all records are transferred to

IMF's Records Division either upon completion of action or when they become non-current. This includes outside correspondence and internal materials such as informal compilations of data, staff-prepared studies and reports, closed department policy and programme files, documents of the Executive Board and other bodies, and information and working files maintained in offices for convenience purposes, which are eventually screened for substantive materials prior to destruction.

Similarly, substantive records of the World Bank, after completed action, are placed in Central Files Stations. Other records such as data files and computer tapes, accounting and disbursement documents, training records, audio-visual materials and personnel records are maintained in the departments. The Secretary's Department is custodian for originals of international agreements for which the Bank is the depository and for current records and proceedings of top-ranking boards and committees.

The UN Secretariat has undergone periodic changes in its records systems. A centralized registry, interrupted by a decentralized branch registry system from 1948 to 1953, is currently being transformed into a decentralized system operating at the divisional or department level. Under the new system, files will be maintained in the originating offices by subject with alpha-numeric codes. Facilitative records will continue to reside in those offices. One of the reasons for change in the records system was widespread disregard of the Registry. Increasingly, offices failed to send outgoing correspondence or internally-generated material to the Registry, and voluminous and undisciplined working files began to appear. As a result, the central Registry became an unreliable substantive record of the UN Secretariat. Records were outside the control of records authorities either because their existence was unknown or because they had been destroyed or removed, and filing systems in individual offices were usually inadequate or non-existent. A classic example

of such confusion are records created by the geographical branches of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD), an appraiser's nightmare. The offices producing these records have been reorganized frequently, with the result a constant shuffle of office titles and geographical responsibilities appearing in a wide array of combinations. These records are arranged by project and theoretically transferred to the Archives Section, which administers the non-current records depository, one year after the project's closure. Failure to transfer all file components simultaneously means that they are often scattered among several accession dossiers reflecting their physical dispersal in the depository. Originals should have been placed in the registry, but most offices have admitted to casual adherence to the registry system. Therefore, these working files are more complete and reliable than the official record. Moreover, the system of differentiated files for each project, where papers relating to project documentation, personnel, equipment and other categories involved in technical assistance projects are grouped together, has only been applied to projects that generated large quantities of paper. For smaller projects, substantive material is intermixed with that on equipment delivery. Moreover, because technical assistance projects are funded by UNDP and the UN Fund for Population Activities and also include contact with national governments, much of the material is duplicated, not only in DTCD's support offices, but in other involved organizations. It is hoped that the new decentralized system will avoid such irremediable pitfalls by providing easy access to records within the originating offices, thereby precluding the need for extensive working files, and that systems devised and monitored by the records management officers will guarantee systematic filing procedures and the separation of the ephemeral from the substantive.

5.2.2. Filing

The DTCD experience in the UN Secretariat demonstrates not only the need to conform to the established records system for the sake of completeness and reliability, but the need to cull the non-valuable from the valuable, so that substantive records are not cluttered with trivia. Registry classification schemes can be manipulated in order to separate subjects with obvious short-term value from those with continuing value. Codes for "Conferences", for example, can be sub-coded to separate correspondence with travel agencies from summary reports. In this vein, UNCTAD subdivides its technical assistance records into categories for project documents and background papers, reports, equipment and training. The first three have continuing value; the latter do not. Another device, used by ILO, the World Bank and IAEA, tries to prevent entrance of ephemeral materials into the system in the first place. IAEA excludes from its Registry "through mail", ephemera such as bank statements, purchase invoices, and requests for publications, and the World Bank eliminates "thank you's", irrelevant clippings and duplicates upon receipt. In the beginning of 1984, UNDRO plans to pull non-substantive material from its technical assistance files and maintain it, with the code designation, in a separate "lateral file".

5.2.3. Weeding

Beyond the preventive measures just described, a few records offices attempt to isolate non-substantive materials by the more costly means of weeding records after their creation. IMF screens working files maintained in operating offices for incorporation of substantive materials into its Central Files. WHO's weeding is limited to contractual technical services agreements whereby the signed agreement is preserved and correspondence is destroyed, and UNIDO weeds only among administrative records uncovered by

retention schedules to locate files that bear on continuing organization obligations, or that have evidential value.

5.3. Records Disposition Authority

5.3.1. General

Disposition authority is usually derived from the organizational manual or a specific directive that addresses the issue. Records offices of organizations lacking registries seem to have the most expansive written authority, as shifts in physical and custodial control are involved. In IMF, World Bank and UN Secretariat regulations, records are defined expansively so that none remain uncovered and personnel understand that all records belong to the organization. Supplementing this concept is the express prohibition of records removal by staff upon separation from the organization. This has not always been sufficient, however, where high-ranking officials do not consider themselves as "staff members" and exempt themselves from such embargoes. This has led to important records losses, as in the case of the UN Archives, when the executive officer has removed both himself and his archives upon retirement. Regulations of the IMF, World Bank, Unesco and the UN Secretariat also confer disposition authority upon records offices, including the drafting of retention schedules for recurring records, or responsibility for ad hoc arrangements where such schedules do not apply. Normally, records offices need approval of operating offices to destroy records that are active or semi-active, but once primary values have elapsed, records officials are empowered to make the ultimate determination about the fate of non-current records. The UN Secretariat requires the removal of records older than three years, and Unesco's manual stipulates five years, unless current operating needs require their continued presence in the operating office. For the IMF and World Bank, the timing of transfer is less explicit, and transfer decisions are a joint

enterprise between originating and records offices, sometimes initiated by the offices in the IMF's case. UNICEF is reviewing its disposition programme, which is now based largely on precedent. At the moment, originating offices, interested parties, auditors and the Records Management Unit make recommendations to an Operations Committee, which makes the final disposition decision. It is particularly important in non-registry systems, such as those just identified, to have written regulations on the handling of records, with specific identification of responsibilities and prohibitions, as the danger of alienation is far greater than where registries exist.

Where all records are under registry control, the nature of regulations needed and authority changes. The alienation of records is reduced by the enforcement of office participation in the registry, rather than by defining records and mandatory transfer procedures. Theoretically, through elaborate registration and circulation control procedures, all substantive materials reside in the system, which is under the control of the records office. Some are more successful than others in insuring complete participation by operating offices. Because manuals generally delineate registry procedures in great detail, and records have already been posited with records offices, it is less necessary to define "records", prohibitions against their removal and proper transfer procedures.

Where registries are decentralized, however, or records exist outside the registry, there is the danger of alienation because of the absence of mandatory transfer rules and written statements granting ultimate disposition authority to the records office. Such regulations are generally vague. WMO allows the deposit of registered records in offices and defines for them what sorts of records should not be maintained in the offices and what should ultimately go into permanent storage. However, its regulations give office directors responsibility for implementation. UPU's manual requires the

transfer of dossiers to archival storage after five years, but there are no records officers *per se* or specific rules that define how it is to be done. WHO's administrative manual gives its records officials final disposition authority and the right to remove records from operating offices, but does not say when. This has implications for some administrative and technical records which are external to the Registry. Reliance for removal of such records and the timing of such is done on an *ad hoc* basis with the advice of unit chiefs. The situation in UNIDO is similar, as there are administrative records maintained outside the central Registry. If not on retention schedules, those with continuing value are transferred, normally after three years, also on an *ad hoc* basis, which depends on the ability of the records officer to make contact with and persuade administrators. There is no written authority for removal. In IAEA's manual, offices are "urged" to transfer inactive non-registry records to the archives, which is the joint responsibility of the transferring and records offices. Disposition authority is passive, as the records office can refuse to accept records presented by offices for temporary or permanent retention, or can, at discretion, preserve transferred records that have been proposed for destruction. However, there seems to be no assurance that untransferred records having continuing value may not be destroyed by the originating office. IAEA, however, is currently amending its records system, so that all records will be under a central computerized file code system, although physically decentralized, and will be placed under retention schedules. The transfer and disposition of UNDP's decentralized registry is under review, as it is currently unregulated.

The current situation in international organizations is thus one characterized by inadequate disposition authority and means of implementation. Registries, if they enjoy total participation, have built-in safeguards against alienation and/or improper records destruction. In non-registry

systems, or where the two systems co-exist, records offices need to be armed with a comprehensive definition of records, prohibitions against their alienation, authority to transfer and a definition of when to do so and the power to make final decisions on the destruction of records. The UN Archives is the only records office whose directive includes all components.

5.3.2. Retention Schedules

Just as the authority needed for records office control over the organization's disposition programme is different where registry systems are in effect and where they are not, the role of retention schedules shifts with each system. In registry systems, retention schedules apply the date at which particular subject files in the custody of records offices are to be destroyed, if they are not to be kept indefinitely. In most cases, they are merely a formalization of prevailing practices and apply to a few categories of files that are obviously preservable or destructible. But they can lighten the burden on personnel charged with responsibility for disposition, as they are triggers for automatic action which can be undertaken by non-professional staff.

Retention schedules assume much more significance in non-registry systems, or where non-registry and registry systems coexist, because they insure mandatory transfer of records into control of the records office. IMF, ILO, the World Bank, UPU, WHO, Unesco and the UN Archives are specifically charged with and/or have effected retention schedules. IAEA, FAO and UNHCR are in the process of drafting or revising them. Weaknesses in retention schedule programmes are caused by partial application, breakdowns in implementation and continuation of those which are outdated. Several schedules in force were more than a decade old and included untenably long retention periods.

5.3.3. Relations with Operating Offices

In order to effect regulations pertaining to records disposition, and even more importantly in their absence, relations with operating offices are particularly significant. For the World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, UNCTAD and Unesco, departments designate liaison personnel to deal with records matters, but only UNCTAD and Unesco indicated that their contacts were above the Senior Registry Clerk level. UNCTAD finds administrative secretaries, who are assistants to divisional directors, responsive to problems that may arise with the central registry, and Unesco has contact with administrative officers who, in all divisions, are responsible for liaison with archives and outside organizations.

Although undesignated, WHO and ILO consult with unit chiefs or divisional directors on transfer and retention matters. The UN Archives has increased its contact with mid- and senior-level officials, but unless pressed, offices relegate archives officers to secretaries and general service personnel. This is largely because of the previous and long-lived practice of accepting any records offered with the simple requirement that a file list accompany them. As file lists are a matter of filing arrangement, secretaries or clerks have been considered by the operating offices as appropriate persons with whom archives officers should confer.

Further, respondents indicated that, except where registries ultimately became "archives" and no transfers occurred, in only one-fourth of the cases did records offices initiate the transfer of records not on an established retention schedule. The response to this non-passive posture and insistence on discussions with professional administrators varies from a grudging willingness to discuss records to mild incredulity that someone could be interested in their management and analysis.

5.4. Sources of Information

Comprehensive information is needed in order to properly identify and evaluate records. Where records require physical and custodial transfer from originating offices to records office facilities in the international organizations, the provision of information by the originator is a prerequisite. UNIDO, Unesco, IMF, WHO and ILO elicit such information through personal consultation with administrators. Others resort to request-for-transfer forms. The UN Archives uses both techniques.

Whichever contact method is used, it is commonplace to require the name of the creating office, records series description, inclusive dates and suggested retention periods. However, solicitation of information on measurement, filing method, existence of finding aids, access restrictions, the extent and whereabouts of duplication, nature and frequency of use, rate of accumulation and frequency of transfer, is rare. From a practical standpoint, statistics on volume, rate of accumulation and frequency of similar transfers, would help records authorities prepare not only for the space required for the immediate transaction, but to plan for the future. Identification of originating office and series description, of course, are clues to evidential and informational value, but the absence of other elements used to measure value severely handicaps intelligent appraisal decisions. For example, a series description of machine-readable records such as "Commodity Trade Statistics of Member States", originating in an office like the International Trade and Transport Statistics Branch of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, would certainly have informational value. If, however, the transfer request or interview indicated lack of a codebook and that annual totals of each commodity had already been published, the measure of informational value would be reduced. The absence of the necessary finding aid

would, in effect, render the series unusable, and content duplication in another source would deprive the series of uniqueness.

The best time to obtain such information is that immediately prior to a proposed transfer. Respondents indicated that the promise of records removal puts administrators at their most accommodating. While it is not always practical from a manpower perspective, an interview provides important details and fills gaps in official directives and organizational charts. The alternative to thorough information-gathering is to pore through the records themselves, which is impractical, given their quantity. It is also unnecessary, if these other shortcuts are effectively exploited.

The quality of the interview and/or the written transfer information is critical. A major portion of the UN Archives appraisal archivist's time is allotted to office visits, but they are only instructional and procedural. Administrators are informed of their obligation to transfer records to the archives, how to complete transfer forms, prepare file lists and pack records. And although the transfer form asks the essential questions, responses are not monitored. Particularly insufficient are the records series description, with most offices defining records nondescriptly as "working papers". Not only does this make reference service more difficult, but it undermines appraisal. Furthermore, file lists, erroneously construed as series descriptions rather than mere statements of records arrangement, cannot be a standard for measuring the value of records.

5.5. Appraisal

5.5.1. General

Active appraisal programmes are not at present in effect in the international organizations. Eleven respondents indicated that they keep all registry material, but the reasons for doing so vary. The lack of an archives

function in WIPO, ECA, UPU and GATT precludes appraisal For IAEA and UNIDO, the central Registry is considered the only substantive record of the organization and is therefore maintained intact, although administrative records are subject to appraisal or automatic disposition per retention schedules. WHO and ILO appraisal programmes are currently in abevance because of understaffing and lack of time, but retention schedules are likewise followed. WHO's schedules, covering the central Registry and budget/finance records, were last compiled in 1973 based on an exchange between previous records officials and unit chiefs. When disposal is due, unit chiefs are consulted before action is taken. In cases of conflict between offices and the schedule, the decision is always on the side of preservation. Files bearing certain registry codes are always preserved, such as those relating to legal or constitutional issues. Where Registry records are destroyed, a specimen file is preserved for each subject code, and in every fifth year, all files within the subject code are kept as a representative series. Unesco, as well, relies on retention schedules that are premised on the preservation of long-term administrative, legal or historical value. Specifically emphasized are records demonstrating policy and procedure, instructions for their implementation reports, records of meetings and conferences and selected operational records of individual transactions.

FAO and UNDRO currently have no retention schedules, but FAO attempts a nominal appraisal by means of registry subject codes. Because of understaffing, records are at least ten years old before undergoing appraisal. As a result of its decentralized registry system, records arrive segmentally at the depository, and they must first be sequentially filed in code order. Based on precedent and personal knowledge of subject codes, the archives officer tags those that are definitely eligible for disposal and those that obviously should be preserved. The remainder are set aside for review and

when possible, they are appraised according to personal familiarity with subjects and activities that tend to have evidential and informational values. Occasionally, space constraints dictate disposals. For example, FAO has frequent dealings with multinational corporations, the records of which are voluminous. A random sample was taken so as not to skew the results in favor of large or small companies, and a list was prepared of all company contacts for the use of scholars. UNDRO tackles its Registry at the subject code level as well, by targeting those considered as having no value. Within the sub-series "Disaster Preparedness", for example, files relating to technical assistance in the fields of pre-disaster planning and preparedness, disaster damage assessment, evaluation of relief needs, and promotion of national legislation on mutual assistance and disaster-related matters, are considered permanently valuable. Files pertaining to training courses or obsolete technical assistance projects are considered as disposable. Moreover, files within subject codes selected for preservation are internally weeded. Among files relating to relief coordination, correspondence between disaster assistance donors, UNDRO and recipients is considered of short-term value and removed. Items documenting political questions, first alerts, eye-witness reports, UNDRO-compiled situation and final evaluation reports and international reaction to relief appeals are preserved. Thus a double weeding takes place. First, at the subject level and, second, within subject codes, because they generally contain a mixture of the valuable and non-valuable. In setting criteria for this ad hoc appraisal, primary considerations are evidential and informational value, as well as the degree to which records are published elsewhere or substitute for other records that should have been preserved, but were not. Although internal duplicates are removed from within subject series, external duplication does not factor into UNDRO's appraisal decisions because of the organization's function as a coordinator for others such as

FAO, the World Food Programme, UNHCR, UNICEF and ILO. Consequently, duplication is rampant, but because the others are single-interest organizations, UNDRO records are more complete and they are not destroyed for this reason.

Of the non-registry systems, UNICEF is reviewing its entire records programme. In the past, appraisal has largely been limited to facilitative records, but preparations are currently being made for an intensive review of the organization's policy and programme records. A History Project staff has been appointed to list such records at the file folder level in order that the contents of records series can be determined. Appraisal decisions will later be made on the basis on this information. The World Bank, however, has appraised records created in top-echelon offices. In its study of 800 cubic feet of records maintained in the Secretary's Department, records officials have preserved what they consider to be records reflecting World Bank policies, procedures and borrowing and loan/credit activities. With this as the standard, the following were preserved: minutes of meetings, discussion summaries, policy files, biographies and nominations relating to the Board of Executive Directors; resolutions, briefings and annual meetings files of the Board of Governors and its Ad Hoc Committees; and capital subscriptions, basic documents and international agreements relating to membership in the World Bank. Administrative, travel and leave records, plus personal correspondence relating to Executive Directors, Alternates and Consultative Groups were disposed. This appraisal exercise was plagued with extraneous records due to reprographic facilities rather than poor records-keeping or scheduling. Of the 10,000 cubic feet of records relating to World Bank projects, numerically arranged within the Office of the Senior Vice-President for Operations, project request submissions, mission reports, legal documents and appraisal reports relating to negotiations, completion reports, correspondence and project performance reviews were preserved. Tender and bidding documents, borrower documents and

other records considered as having no historical value in evaluating the project's effectiveness were disposed. Although these project files were scheduled, the contents of each file were appraised individually, and architectural designs were sampled. In both examples, the appraisal records were covered by retention schedules, which apparently distinguished between records having facilitative traits and those reflecting general policies and programmes of the organization.

The UN Archives has appraised records in the course of its arrangement and description programme, rather than under the appraisal function. Major disposals were made among records of the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in the early 1950's, when the Archives was confronted with an accumulation of approximately 25,000 linear feet of files. These had not been pared at all because of the opinion that they might be referred to again during the course of additional relief operations. However, once it was decided that they were a closed archive group, their volume was reduced to 2,500 linear feet. Two major criteria were applied: groupings of facilitative records were destroyed, as were obvious duplications. As a result, records concerning supply and shipping, a major UNRRA activity, were disposed. To identify duplicates, the chronological files, consisting of outgoing letters from Washington, were compared to the UNRRA Registry files, and it was confirmed that their contents were covered in these subject files. Although preservation of the chronological file would have been desirable for its alternative arrangement, space considerations dictated its disposal. Records of UNRRA Missions were reduced of their facilitative files as well, except those of the China Mission. Generally, subject files were left intact, as file-by-file appraisal would have required too much expense to justify the small amount of shelf-space that would have been saved. It was also thought

that, because weeding is subjective, it was better to avoid mistakes by refraining from this activity.

Other mission records, including those of Congo Operations and the UN Emergency Force, 1956-1962 (UNEF I), were reduced by disposal of purely administrative records. These projects were especially difficult because they arrived in the Archives premises in total disarray. Extensive listing of all files and an attempt to recreate their original order were made prior to any attempt at appraisal. Records of the UN Emergency Force, 1973-1978 (UNEF II), were better ordered upon their transfer, as records officials in the Field were persuaded to provide file lists prior to the arrival of the records. Those that obviously related to housekeeping matters were destroyed *in situ*, so that only substantive records and those whose value was not evident from file titles were dispatched to New York. Further appraisal was then made on the borderline cases.

The appraisal of records of the Office of the Secretary-General required no such second thoughts. It was decided to preserve these records *in toto*, because they were the most substantive of all records produced by the organization.

5.5.2. Two Case Studies

5.5.2.1. UN Archives

After transfer of Registry files to the UN Archives, two attempted appraisals were abandoned when it became apparent that time and staff expenditures exceeded the benefits of space released by identification of records obviously lacking further value. During the exercise, however, the Registry file plan was consulted in order to identify for preservation those subjects with sufficient informational value and to assign retention periods to subjects having limited value.

This undertaking tailed for several reasons. Analysis of placement in the administrative hierarchy and functions of originating office could not apply to subject files whose contents were brought together from many sources. Moreover, the practice of discontinuing subject codes for later application to other activities and subjects listed in the file plan made later disposal impossible. Subject codes, therefore, became unreliable records identifiers, and errors in subject codes and filing exacerbated the unreliability of the codes. Registry codifiers found special difficulty in selecting the most correct and specific subject code when a record was interdisciplinary resulting from activity involving several offices. The practice of allowing operating offices to dispatch and assign subject codes directly to outgoing mail magnified the problem. The appraisal projects were abandoned when it became apparent that expenditures of time and staff far exceeded benefits in released space, as only subjects with obvious long-term or ephemeral value were identified for preservation or destruction.

Other defects in the registry came to light in 1975 during a study of the Secretariat "paperwork operations", including evidence that only 15 percent of incoming mail entered the official file system and the fact that most records were generally outside it.1/ Therefore, had attempts to appraise the Registry on the basis of subject codes been more successful, the results would still have been specious because records chosen for preservation would have been selected from a fraction of the total of records accumulated by the organization.

5.5.2.2. ILO 2/

Due to a backlog of 80,000 inactive Registry files and prospects of future accumulations of 8,000 files per year, the ILO Archives Committee proposed a blueprint for archival appraisal in 1969. Accepting the premise

that "no technique can be devised that will reduce to a merely mechanical or automatic operation the decision which records are worth retaining and which can be safely discarded", the Committee suggested the use of retired ILO officials for the purpose of "careful individual analysis and evaluation" of these records. Excluded were case files because of sameness of subject matter and returns, applications, claims and accounting records because of uniformity of format.

Examiners' evaluations, based on secondary value and a brief file description, were to be placed in each file for final review by the ILO Registrar. Secondary value was defined as continuing obligations of the organization, precedent information "in the constitutional, legal, policy, administrative or other fields", or "historical interest or value". To assist examiners, the plan supplied guidelines on user needs, bona fide research, the test of uniqueness and classes of files that should prima facie be considered for preservation and destruction. Supplementing the latter were lists of main ILO activities and appropriate retention periods for each. The attempt to dilute subjectivity through elaborate guidelines shows recognition of it. In fact, the Committee report concluded that the guidelines presented had demonstrated that "archival procedures cannot be expressed in the systematic terminology of an exact science. In spite of the help to be obtained from lists and classifications based on past experience, the examiner's appraisal depends to a considerable extent on the common-sense application of a few broad principles".

Comparison with the experience of the UN Archives implies that time and staff availability for appraisal-by-subject would not make the difference between success and failure, as the results of each appraisal project, one imagined and the other experienced, were much the same: isolation of relatively small quantities of files readily identified for automatic destruction,

including routine activities and subjects relating to administrative detail, printing and publication, library acquisitions, acknowledgements, financial details and the like. Further, each had similar doubts about the accuracy of file content and titles and concern about the mixture of valuable and valueless items within individual files. Both cases have negative implications for appraisal. File-by-file and code-by-code appraisal, necessitated by subject classification systems, are inordinately time-consuming and preclude judgments of records value in the context of their organic relationship with other records. And before or after appraisal, files are still inflated with ephemera.

5.6. Conclusion

International organizations depend largely on registries, centralized and decentralized, to provide the substantive records of their existence. Some records officers evidenced great faith in the efficacy of the system; others were pessimistic about the participation therein. The recent experience of the UN Secretariat in this regard demonstrates the unreliability of a central records system where there is widespread non-participation. Several respondents were concerned and frustrated about the alienation of substantive records, particularly at the highest levels, caused by separate files maintenance or removal from the organization. Several agreed that this trend probably existed at other office levels as well. It is difficult to determine with any exactness the degree to which parallel substantive records systems exist without the assistance of organization-wide surveys. The separate maintenance of facilitative records by housekeeping offices was not a concern, nor should it have been, except that it involves the principle of total records control. If jurisdiction over substantive and facilitative records is divided, a grey area develops where definitions of each fail to converge. Therefore, records

offices must have control over all records of the organization and their disposition.

All of the above is background to the quality of exercises in appraisal and selection. Where such attempts are currently being made, it is done by a a few, in some cases by one person, and only during short periods of respite from other records management and archives responsibilities. Aside from adherence to records schedules in a few of the organizations, selection is a form of glorified weeding, where records in centralized systems are identified at the subject level as being obviously facilitative and, therefore, disposable. However, even if aggressive appraisal programmes were actively pursued in all the international organizations, it has been shown that centralized registry systems do not lend themselves to disposal of large quantities of records. This being so, it is critical that care be taken as to what enters the system in the first place. This preventive measure would also improve the quality of decentralized registry and non-registry systems, although the operation of provenance in each, in different degrees, allows the larger disposals.

NOTES

1/ "Study of the Registry and Files Management System at United Nations Headquarters" (draft report prepared for the Administrative Management Service, United Nations Organization, 1976), pp. 21-50.

2/ All information about the ILO records programme comes from Archives Committee, "Seventh Report to the Director-General" (unpublished, ILO, 1970), pp. 1-25 and annexes.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND GUIDELINES

The study of records appraisal in international organizations shows that appraisal is not a singular exercise, but a continuous process affecting the entire life-cycle of records. It has also been demonstrated that records systems and the presence or absence of information on provenance affect records selection. These premises lead to conclusions that have been supported by actual appraisal experience: that is, the need for a total records programme in which records management and archival functions are joined. It is only logical that if appraisal is a constant factor in the life-cycle of records, controls over them should be equally enduring. If the contents and arrangement or classification of dossiers affect the quality of how and what is preserved as archival, then attention to such matters ought to precede selection.

Elements that appear external to appraisal, such as the placement of the records office in the organization's bureaucracy and its functions, staffing and authority, bear directly on the completeness and quality of records to be appraised, the ability to arrive at well-considered and justifiable decisions, and the probability of their implementation. Appraisal should be judged by results, rather than by methodology alone. Meaningful appraisal cannot occur without adequate resources and the records themselves, for appraisal technique, by itself, ensures neither.

The following guidelines present maximum goals. For organizations where the very establishment of an Archives unit has been repeatedly denied, they may appear as a "wish list", and for others, there may be protracted difficulties before they are even partially achieved. The unfortunate facts are that office reorganizations and authority directives require approval from top administrators, and cooperation from records-creating offices cannot always be mandated, much less enforced. Nevertheless, these goals should be

sought, even if their attainment is piecemeal, for the appraisal experience of international organizations amply demonstrates the effect of their absence.

Resources

6.1. Placement of the Records Office in the Organization

Records offices should be removed from administrative services and placed at par with other of the organization's information services 1/ so as to position them at a sufficiently high level in the organization to insure proper recognition, authority, independence and adequacy of resources, including the ability to attract personnel experienced in archives and records management. Not only would such a move end the eclipse of the records office and its needs by the housekeeping services, but it would cause a shift in status. Administrators in substantive offices with whom cooperation is necessary would be more approachable and receptive to personnel considered as equals rather than warehouse managers. 2/

6.2. Delineation of Functions: Registry, Records Management and Archives

Records management should be incorporated into the archival function within an archives and records management office. Registries can operate separately within this office or as an appendage to records management, but should continue to manage current records within their purview.

Records management should oversee all current records by devising classification and filing schemes appropriate to each administrative unit excepting records integrated into a registry; review files management procedures to ensure that all records enter the system, whether it is a registry, decentralized non-registry or a combination of the two; inventory all current and semi-current records of the organization so that appraisal decisions are based on consideration of all the organization's records; draft retention schedules based on inventories and primary records values in consultation with

records-creating offices; and monitor the disposal of records lacking secondary value.

Archives officers should have final authority over the disposition programme, thereby ruling on retention schedules proposed by records managers and administrators; overseeing accession standards in terms of the quality of information provided by records transferring offices; and reappraising records transferred to the Archives unit on the basis of continuing value, or because they were prematurely judged to have enduring value.

6.3 Direction of the Archives and Records Management Office

The Archives and Records Management Office should be headed by an archivist who is familiar with records management. Consideration of records management and archives functions leads logically to this conclusion. After satisfying the organization's operating needs, records are reduced in volume, and those with continuing value are deposited in an archives. Records managers and archivists contribute to this progression in different ways and at opposite ends of the records' life-cycle. Records management is "concerned with achieving economy and efficiency in the creation, use and maintenance, and disposition of records".[7] Through the efforts of records managers, archivists are presented with coherently arranged records, inventories of the organization's holdings and information on primary records value, so that they can assign long-term value and thus determine the longevity of records. The activities of both functions should be closely coordinated, as one is built on the other, but because archivists define archives and exercise custodial responsibility over them, the archival function should take precedence.

6.4 Education and Training

Archivists recruited by international organizations should have an academic degree in history or other social sciences and broad archives

experience, to insure knowledge of historical methodology and trends on which to base judgments concerning evidential and informational values. Determination of evidential values requires research experience and analytical ability for the conduct of administrative history. This exercise reveals hierarchical patterns in the organization, office authorities and interrelationships that devolve upon the records they produce and, subsequently, allows the isolation of records that depict the plans, policies, procedures and programmes of the organization. A background in history is particularly relevant to assessment of informational value, as it is necessary to be familiar with documentation that is currently available for research and imagine what sources might later be valuable. An archivist cannot define historiographical trends with certainty, and there is always the chance that future generations will find fault with judgments. However, the impossibility of forecasting only underscores the need for professionals well-trained in history and archives who will sometimes err, but will come closer to target than those without this background. More important than content knowledge is familiarity with historical methodology and "empathy" for research, for expertise in all research fields is impossible.4/

At the paraprofessional, or in UN parlance, the general service level, proper recruitment and training is important, as the quality of codification and filing is essential to the reliability of registry systems. It has been observed that messengers and clerical staff are often transferred to registry offices and that there is a need to devise a technique of personnel selection in order to determine "aptitude, analytical judgment, cognative ability, assessment of files problems and their solution, and manual dexterity (where applicable)" in prospective staff.5/ To fail to do so means continued apprehension about the integrity of file titles, codes and contents.

6.3. Authority

6.3.1. Public Relations

In order to gain cooperation from offices in terms of files management, timely transfer of records and information needed to analyze them, records offices should continuously demonstrate to others, especially those at high levels where reorganization and budgetary decisions are made, that their services are professional and impact heavily on the organization.

Bureaucratic influence usually requires the backing of authority, preferably in written form. But influence is enhanced when authority-by-fiat is augmented by general recognition of the value of services to be offered. The ability to streamline the flow of paper and remove the non-essential, rationalize records management, remove non-current records for the release of office space, provide reference service from the intermediate storage area and maintain a research facility, should be advertised. General distribution of an annual report or pamphlet in which statistics on metres of records transferred, office space released, loans furnished and reference request handled, would be far more effective than generalities about intended programme or services. However, demonstrable service and benefits are most effective in gaining the cooperation of administrators whose primary interests lie neither records management nor archives.

6.3.2. Written Authority

While amiable relations with administrators are essential, they are not reliable, for staffing is never permanent, and cooperative situations shift with personnel changes. Therefore, the responsibilities and relationships of records and operating offices should be institutionalized in an official regulation. Such regulation should minimally incorporate the following points:

6.5.3. Definition of Records and Staff Responsibilities

Records should be defined as all recorded information, regardless of physical form, created or received in the course of the organization's business. They should be claimed specifically as the property of the organization. To eliminate loopholes, removal of records from the organization's premises by any staff member, during employment or upon separation, should be expressly prohibited. Further, "staff member" should be defined to include all personnel, including the chief executive officer.

6.5.4. Responsibilities of the Records Office

Records offices should be charged with files management, the conduct of periodic records surveys, establishment of retention schedules based on survey inventories, implementation of the mandatory transfer of records from operating offices to intermediate storage and authority over records disposition under its archives component. The date of transfer should be set at three to five years after creation or, in special cases requiring extensions, upon mutual agreement between the parties in order to prevent records accumulations outside records office control.

6.5.5. Responsibilities of the Operating Offices

Operating offices should be charged with the timely transfer of semi-current records per schedules agreed upon by both parties unless the need for exception can be demonstrated, and disposal of records should be clearly prohibited without the express approval of the records office. Further, the appointment of records liaison personnel, at least at the division level, should be required.

The above guidelines are closely interconnected, as the existence of a liaison officer would obviate lack of control over non-current records that tend to sit indefinitely in operating offices. Such an officer would provide

a locus of responsibility and contact for records officers as well as serve as a source of information about the length of time records are needed to discharge obligations of the organization and of records profiles needed for appraisal.

Records Surveys and Inventories

6.6. Because records should be appraised in relation to other records of the organization, it is axiomatic that all records be accounted for in an inventory resulting from a records survey. Surveys should be conducted even in organizations where it appears that records are covered by a registry because of the existence in offices of strays from the system due to negligence, or hoarding of documentation for convenience or reference purposes.

All records, produced at every level of the organization, current and non-current, should be identified. Excepting registries, for which there are file plans, identification should be at the series level, for this represents the lowest common denominator of similarity and is the preferable level at which records should be analyzed and retention periods applied. Because it will be the foundation for a general disposition programme, the survey should gather the following basic information for each series: the office of origin, including the subdivision that produced the records; a series description consisting of a series title, identification of major record types, content and inclusive dates; measurement and estimate of annual accumulation; arrangement, if not under an established registry system; location; current usage; relationship to other records; access restrictions; and recommendations for retention. Above all, descriptive vagueness should be avoided, as it dilutes information upon which the disposition programme is based. The office of origin should be prevailed upon to supply accurate and complete information. Slipshod information should be rejected, as it ultimately undermines the

appraisal process. The inventory, together with records samples, should be a basis for records analysis and retention schedules.

Appraisal

6.7. Records Systems

Arrangement and classification patterns should be refined in order to clarify differences among records. Appraisal and selection of records in non-registries depends largely on the presence of information on provenance and separation of series organically formed as a result of office functions and activities. Analyses based on these considerations determine evidential and informational values that are further qualified by factors of uniqueness, concentration of information and other measurements of value enumerated in section 3.2. Therefore, records reflecting similar activity, subject or format should be grouped together and their mergence avoided. The more precise the series, the more easy to identify it, judge its value and effect its proper disposition.

The absence of conveniently available information on provenance in registries and the need to conduct appraisal at the dossier or subject code level calls for a different type of specificity, whereby subject codes should be manipulated to effect distinctions, where possible, between the substantive and facilitative, and between policy and operational matters. Under the common subject "Fellowships", for example, records codified as "Programme Evaluation" pertain to policy matters having long-term value, while those filed under "Individual Fellowships" or "Inter-Agency Coordination" relate to short-term operational matters concerning administrative details of programme execution. Similarly, under "Aid to Africa", records filed as "Background Information" and "Distribution of Equipment", respectively, reflect substantive and facilitative differences. Attention to such distinctions reduce mixtures of records having long and short-term value within file. Although

the dossier level of appraisal differs from the series level approach in non-registries, the effect of refining distinctions is the same: easier evaluation and disposition.

6.8. Filing to Effect Separation

Differences in appraisal of non-registry and registry systems have been explained as, on one hand, judgments concerning the "total organic accumulation of an office" through the selection of whole series, and on the other, selection of "dossiers within certain classes (series)"; further, selection of individual dossiers in the former case is considered a violation of "organic character and archival integrity of the series", whereas the latter requires weeding of dossiers within series.6/ However, screening, or stripping within files is untenable in both systems because of cost in staff and time, as well as sacrifice in uniformity and objectivity of selection. Therefore, records whose short-term value can be predetermined should be separated from those with continuing value, and those with no value beyond immediate usage should be kept out of the system altogether. Such a measure, is, in effect, preventive screening.

When in the life-cycle of records this occurs determines by whom it is done. The notion that administrators should control the burgeoning of records through excision of the non-essential is not new. But the benefit of winnowing records of the non-valuable in the early part of their life is offset by the conversion of administrators into de facto archivists because archives are formed from the residuum of administrative disposals. In fact, current acceptance of appraisal as an archival function has thrust decisions on how to reduce non-current records upon archivists, and the ability to lessen bulk without a commensurate reduction in value rests largely on the degree to which records with value and those without are intermingled. Authorship of the ILO's appraisal plan described in section 5.5 2.2., shows clearly that

records evaluation and selection were considered within the archival function, as does the Archives Committee's determination of retention periods for specific ILO activities. But, the application of retention periods to dossiers containing record items of mixed value caused the Committee to advocate the preservation of entire files on the basis of one or more valuable items. Thus the inability to strip individual dossiers of acknowledged ephemera was one of the plan's stumbling blocks.

There is an alternate method which combines the better elements of both administrative and archival appraisal, namely, the ability to separate records having temporary value into collateral dossiers at the time of filing for later disposal, but under the direction of records offices. Records office authority distinguishes this system from administrative appraisal: the timing of separation differentiates it from the ILO plan. To effect early separation, broad classes of subjects and record types lacking long-term value should be listed under themes reflecting major office functions or subject matter series. Examples of major functions and subject matter series are buildings management, purchase and transportation, printing and reproduction, conferences and others of similar character. Subsidiary to these classes should be enumerated specific transactions, subjects and record types. Under conferences and meetings, for example, programme schedules, invitation lists, agendas and the like would be listed as temporary and eligible for separate. Where records produced by an office are generally of this genre, or where they concentrate under certain registry themes, this separation cannot occur. Its merits are limited to mixed records, such as correspondence files, and for this reason, it is particularly adaptable to the registry system.7/

However, the technique of excluding the more transitory of short-term records, those having only immediate value or no value at all, applies to all systems. IAEA's "through mail", already mentioned, defines documentation of

a transitory nature, and items earmarked as "papiers de corbeille" by French archivists include duplicate copies, items routed to wrong offices and on which no action is taken, invitations, rough drafts and the like.8/ Peripheral materials discussed in section 3.2.2.7. can be added to this category.

These several preventive measures cannot create a pristine system in which each record that enters has enduring value. In registry systems, documents produced by lower-ranked operational offices will be mixed with those coming from above when the functions and activities of several converge and their records are filed in common. The existence of all kinds of records cannot be envisaged in order to categorize them in advance according to desired longevity, for records creation is not totally predictable and there are different durations of short-term value. At least, pre-screening blocks the most non-essential and obviously short-term items from entering the body of records that is to endure.

3.2.2.9 Extant Records

Unfortunately, refinements in arrangement, classification and filing cannot be applied retroactively to records that already exist. To recapitulate, record of international organizations consist of centralized or decentralized registries and decentralized non-registries. Many of their characteristics are in opposition. Central registries are unitary systems that arrange records by subject so that organic cohesion exists within files whose contents are mixtures of varying provenance and retention values. Consequently, appraisal occurs at the file level on the basis of informational value. Evidence of the organization is derived from contextual information rather than the way in which records were created and maintained. Conversely, non-registries are decentralized systems in which records have organic cohesion as series arising out of commonality of subject, activity or format, to which office of origin and retention values can be ascribed. As a result,

they are appraised for evidential and informational value at the series level. Decentralized registries combine elements of each. They are unitary within their frame of reference and should therefore be appraised at the file level according to informational value. However, the fact of their decentralization means that records can be identified by source, not at the lowest administrative level as in non-registries, but intermediately, at the divisional level, for example. With these distinctions in mind, records in decentralized non-registries are most receptive to evaluation because of the ability to identify them by series and source.

The appraisal of records in a centralized registry is most difficult because the weeding process that it necessitates is not totally objective, and the unreliability of file content involves risk in selections for disposal. Such caveats do not require that registries be kept in toto. Easily segregable administrative records with obvious short-term value should be disposed. These are generally concentrated under major themes or sub-themes relating to administrative matters, such as those described in section 6.8. In decentralized registries, such records are located in those registry components that cover administrative units of the organization. Some administrative records are common to all institutional areas, including substantive offices and functions, and where they can be identified and separated, they should be culled for disposal. Because of the volume of administrative records and the space released by their elimination, such undertakings are usually worth the minimal effort that they require.

Lists of disposed file titles should be maintained so that, in combination with the files preserved, there is a complete picture of all that was once in the registry. They also serve as precedents for future disposals. Further selection of files whose value is not so clearly short-term is not worth the time and effort.

6.10. Sampling

The survey of records generated by international organizations revealed the existence of case files maintained either within or parallel to registries. Because they are bulky, and it is not usually necessary to keep all the information they collectively contain, reduction in their volume is particularly desirable. Partial retention, or sampling, provides an alternative to total retention or destruction.9/ Technique depends on the appraisal of records to be sampled and the reasons for their preservation, but the several procedures possible fall under one of two sampling methods: selective or statistical.10/ In selective sampling, records are chosen for their significance. This is a subjective judgment, and results are more biased than the sample proceeding from statistical sampling, which is systematic and objective. No matter what the method, records should be both voluminous and homogeneous. Consequently, sampling is especially adaptable to case files, which are "homogeneous in general form, in the procedures they represent, and in the areas of activity in which they deal", despite the different subject of each file.11/

The interjection of sampling into an appraisal study is not to suggest that it is a means of avoiding appraisal decisions; rather, such judgments must precede sampling applications. If records have high concentrations of value, or are purely administrative or facilitative, it is purposeless to sample them.12/ Instead, it should be viewed as an option in records disposition especially adaptable to records dissimilar to those already described in registry or non-registry systems.

6.11. Conclusion

It is highly doubtful that a systematic and objective method of appraisal will ever be devised, given the uniqueness of each institution and

its records, the impossibility of forecasting all future research needs, relativity of records values and dependency of records selection on arrangement and classification systems.

Also in question is the feasibility of making all determinations of value at the file level. The worth of appraisal is linked to its purpose, which is the reduction of records in order to release space, lessen maintenance costs and render those that remain more manageable for research. Appraisal decisions cannot be black and white, so that records having any value are saved and those having no value are destroyed. Rather, records should have sufficient value to justify their continued preservation. If then, as in the case of central registries, only records having short-term value can be safely disposed and appraisal beyond this level involves risk with limited results, why continue an exercise that fails to pay both in intellectual and economic terms?

Therefore, it should be recognized that appraisal is not a single episode in the life-cycle of records and that what enters the records system is as important as what leaves it. Early planning for records maintenance and disposition, and incorporation of responsibility for these records management activities into the archival function, will help to achieve such goals.

NOTES

1/ A recent RAMP study also took this position, which was based on recommendations adopted at the Fourth Session of ICA/SAIO, held in Geneva in 1979, and its Fifth Session in Brussels, 1980.

2/ Marie C. Stark, "Development of Records Management and Archives Services within United Nations Agencies: A RAMP with Guidelines" (unpublished draft, 1983), pp. 15-16.

3/ Frank B. Evans, et al., op cit., 428.

4/ Lawrence J. McCrank, "Prospects for Integrating Historical and Information Studies in Archival Education," XLII (October, 1979) 446. See also, Michael Cook, Guidelines for Curriculum Development in Records Management and the Administration of Modern Archives: A RAMP Study, General Information Programme and UNISIST, PGI-82/WS/16 (Paris: Unesco, 1982), pp. 8-12 and 29-31.

5/ Stark, op cit., pp. 38-41.

6/ Letter from Dr. Frank B. Evans to Dr. Eckhardt Franz, 15 April 1981, as quoted by Felix Hull, The Use of Sampling Techniques in the Retention of Records: A RAMP Study with Guidelines, General Information Programme and UNISIST, PGI-81/WS/26 (Paris: Unesco, 1981), p. 45.

7/ Sidney R. Hall, "Retention and Disposal of Correspondence Files," American Archivist (1952), pp. 3-14. Hall's article on the experience of the U.S. Tennessee Valley Authority is the basis for this presentation, although the use of such checklists has also been noted by others. Hall observes that the result of this records management experiment yielded a 30 percent reduction in total records accumulation.

8/ H. Blaquière, R. Favreau and Y. Pérotin, "Les Archives en Formation et le Pre-Archivage," in Manuel d'Archivistique (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1970), pp. 115-16.

9/ For a detailed study of sampling theory and techniques see Felix Hull's RAMP Study, op cit.

10/ McReynolds, op cit., p. 7.

11/ Paul Lewinson, "Archival Sampling," American Archivist, XX (October, 1957), 296.

12/ For administratative or facilitative records designated for disposal, "samples" may be selected for purposes of documenting procedures of the organization at a later date.

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APPENDIX

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